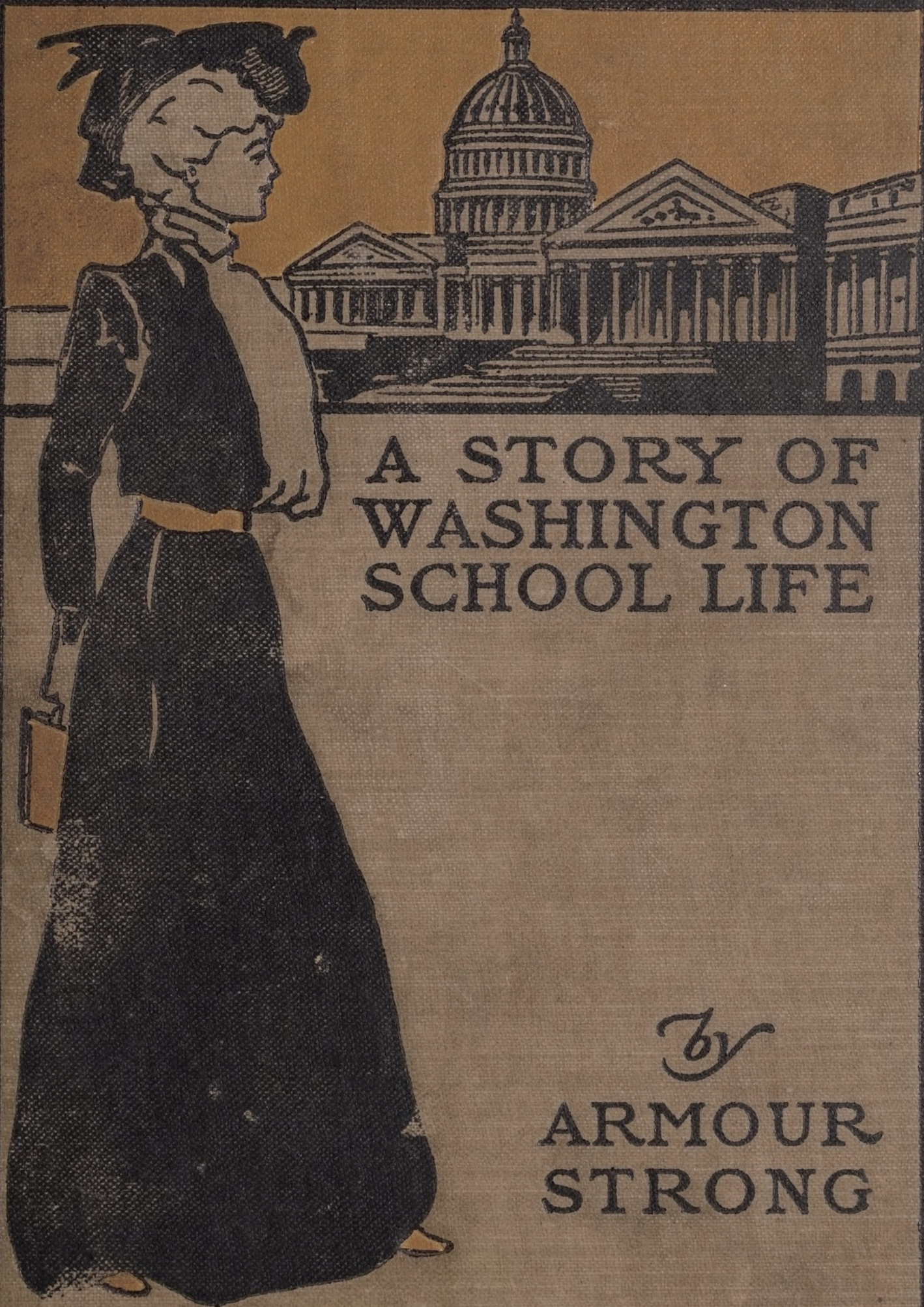


DEAR DAYS



A STORY OF
WASHINGTON
SCHOOL LIFE

By
ARMOUR
STRONG



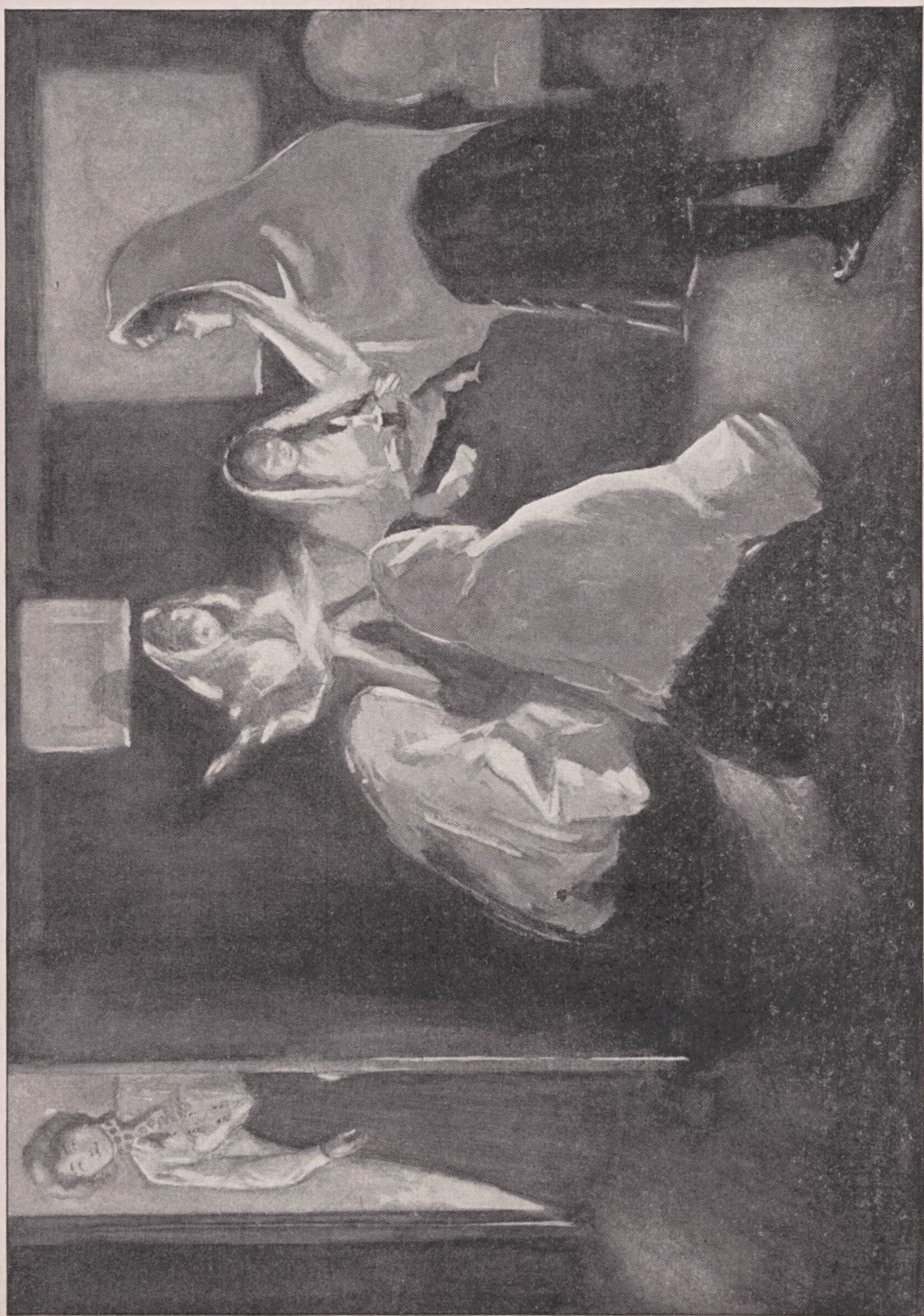
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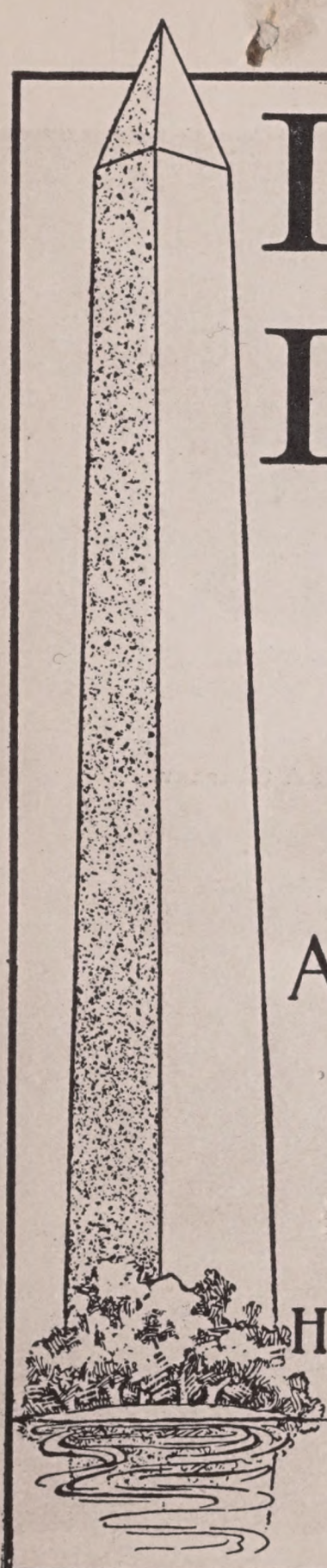
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DEAR DAYS



"GHOSTS."



DEAR DAYS

*A Story
of Washington
School Life*

BY

ARMOUR STRONG

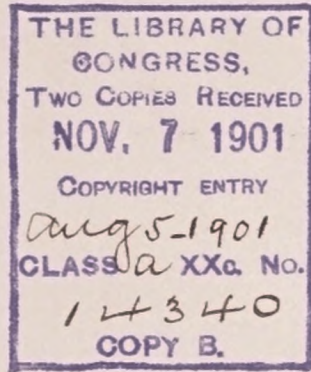
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TO

THE REAL MISS IVAH, ANNA, BESSIE, CORA,
DAISY, MATTIE, NETTIE AND
LITTLE JIM,

WITH

PLEASANT MEMORIES OF DEAR, HAPPY
SCHOOL-DAYS AND THE
WARM REGARD
OF

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THINKING over the happy times at school recalls to mind certain childish but vigorous criticisms of many books and of objectionable parts in them. "Who cares how things look? Places and yards and houses and rooms and furniture are tiresome—it takes so long to get to what people do and say!" was a frequent criticism. Much description of anything and even the shortest bit of moralizing was always skipped with an impatient sigh and the determined remark "Some day I will write a book and it won't have all that in it! And I'll begin it by making somebody say something!"

A little later I found myself responsible for the books many children read because I could not resist any demand for directions for travelling in the world of books. "You have read so many books and you know just what we like," said my little friends. "You know books and you know children, so you can tell us what they ought and what they ought not to read," said my friends, their mothers. Those who have been in the same position will realize how difficult it is to please both mother and child. There are endless books which a boy between ten and fifteen may read with various

degrees of pleasure and profit, but many have felt the lack of books for girls of the same age.

"Maybe that's the reason so many girls read silly novels so soon," reasoned my grandmotherly childish self. "Some day I will write a book that shall be one more of the right kind for girls."

The "some day" has come and gone; there is an actual book which I must call mine, and now comes the relentless, troublesome question, "Does 'Dear Days' fulfil the childish ideal?" Who may decide that but the girls and their mothers? When I held in secret a receipt from an express company, when my heart throbbed wildly at the sound of horses' feet trotting swiftly, when my sight seemed to fail as red wagons stopped near my gate—then, ah, then! I murmured to myself: "Even if the MS. comes back, I really do think it is what the little girl of long ago would have liked."

Alas! My older self has cruelly betrayed that determination of the young critic. If you will trouble yourself to notice you may find two separate descriptive passages which were put in at the suggestion of the publishers. This I do not tell to that past self and I trust you not to do so. In any event, as you may find in one second, the book does begin by "making somebody say something."

ARMOUR STRONG.

WASHINGTON, D. C.,
July, 1901.

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DEAR DAYS

CHAPTER I.

SOMETHING TURNS UP.

“ ‘O H, Maryland, my Maryland,’ we must away from your red clay, why can’t we stay here every day,” mournfully sang Anna Roderick, as she sat under the tall oak trees and looked first at Oak Cottage and then up and down Fourth Avenue. Her eyes lingered lovingly on the thick trunk of the tree that had grown up to the cottage, and then followed the branches as they spread out over the roof. “It *does* look as though it is growing right out of the cottage. I am so glad we have a name that means something.”

The Grove had begun its existence as a Methodist camp-meeting ground with tents to shelter the worshippers from the city of Washington, twenty-one miles away. But, with the rest of the world, it had progressed. The canvas dwelling-places were

replaced by pine-board cottages in the shape of tents, but with more rooms to meet the demand for comfort, and with fancy fronts and porches to satisfy the desire for decoration. Religious services were held in a large wooden tabernacle, where the children could sit and measure the length of the minister's sermon, or watch the birds, the butterflies, and the other children at play in the six avenues converging at the Circle. The railway station was a quarter of a mile away, and the road between was the principal avenue, with a few two-story cottages, built by the more pretentious of the stockholders in the Grove Association.

Oak Cottage had been bought by the Rodericks so that Anna might go to the country and be in the sunlight and fresh air all summer. From the porch she could see the ministers and congregation and hear most of what was said. The soil in the yard was red and rocky, so a load of sand from another county had been dumped at the side of the house. Wonderful houses had often been made of sand, and on the last day of the school vacation Anna and Clifford had been forced to construct another, while the rest of the family packed everything to be moved to Washington.

Mr. Roderick had been a clerk to "Uncle Sam" since boyhood. Living free from business worry and competition, he had centred his interest in home and family, and was disturbed by nothing so much as the necessity of spending the evening outside of his home circle. Responsibility could not be attached to him. A boyishness of manner and a love of joking made him appear to his three children as one of themselves. Mrs. Roderick was one of the dear, wise, beautiful mothers with the bravest, brightest spirit of any. With herself and husband and children to guide aright, and all practical matters for her to settle, she had a keen interest in the outside world, and was known as the best of church-workers. She longed for the best of everything, but was restricted by lack of money, and for the sake of her invalid daughter she denied herself much she might have had. She made mother, home and heaven the sweetest words known.

Early in the morning the Rodericks closed Oak Cottage and began the long drive to the city with thoughts still on the summer happenings.

"'Summer's the time for fun.' I do wish there was no end to it," sighed Anna Roderick. But whenever she mounted the wish-horse, good sense

immediately helped her to get down again. So, as she watched a toad hop away from the carriage-wheels, she added, "Going home behind a horse instead of a steam-engine makes the summer longer, doesn't it?"

Mrs. Roderick smiled at the daughter beside her, and that was all the answer needed. This mother and daughter understood each other without much speech. "Are you tired?" Mrs. Roderick asked anxiously.

"Not the least bit. I guess we've come half the way, too. Janet doesn't know what she is missing. I *wish* she liked Kate to pull her to The Grove and back, as the rest of us do."

This family of five had one opinion about most things. To Anna it seemed that Janet was disloyal to prefer an hour's ride in the steam-car to an all-day ride in their carriage.

"Kate doesn't feel hurt. Now if Janet was here there would be some excuse for this slow traveling. Get up!" said Mr. Roderick, as he put out his hand for the whip.

Kate was the honorary member of the family, and never allowed any of her kin to have more than the intention of using a whip on her. It had

to be admitted that she was a horse with a long barrel; but it was consoling to think that perhaps that was why she went so fast. When the hind feet of a horse are always trying to catch up with the fore feet, the result is charming to lovers of fast riding.

Clifford was on the front seat with his father. When Kate quickened her pace, he twisted and tumbled to his knees so he could face his mother. Prompted by the wisdom of five years, he smiled lovingly before making a request.

"If we've gone half way it's time for gingerbread, isn't it? Don't you want some, Anna?" He knew that if she would back his request it would be granted.

"If you eat gingerbread you'll be thirsty, and we are not near a spring." Anna skillfully avoided the possibility of blame from either side.

"There ought to be one somewhere near here. They told us about it at Norbec," said Mr. Roderick. Then he was surprised at the general laugh.

"Papa, when will you give it up?" asked Anna. "Don't you remember we have looked every time for that spring? I believe it's dried up. Listen! I hear voices."

"Why, there are two children! Let's ask them about the spring." Mr. Roderick put his hands to his mouth and called, "Hullo there, a minute!"

Two barefooted girls slowly came to the road. Though they were stingy of speech they readily pointed out the long-sought spring.

"'Never give up,' is my motto," said Mr. Roderick.

"Is there a house near here?" asked Mrs. Roderick.

"Yes'm, the school-house. School opened this morning."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Anna, as they drove on. "As summer can't last forever I wish I could go to school. It's so tiresome and stupid to study by myself. You have to be always making me, or I have to be making myself, and we both get tired!"

Mrs. Roderick was surprised at this unusual impatience in Anna. "I wish you could go," she said with the least bit of sadness in her tone. This mother was always putting aside trouble and keeping herself bright for her invalid daughter. She had unconsciously imbued the daughter with the same brave spirit, and Anna was vexed with herself

because she had called up a trouble her mother must put aside.

"Never mind," she said brightly. "I am glad I have the books and brains, and *can* learn something if I keep on trying. I'm so lazy that keeping on is the botheration of it."

"What do you study things for, anyway?" asked Clifford. "I wish *I* didn't have to go to school this winter. What's the use?"

"*I* don't want to be a stupid," laughed Anna. "Somehow I feel as if I could—" she hesitated, laughed again, and then finished—"I think I *could* learn a lot if I'd only done the things over and over and over again as they do in the schools. My mind won't always work when I want it to. I think it would be easier if I had some one to get ahead of."

She felt but did not exactly understand her difficulty. She needed regular study and constant drill in the parts of studies that school-girls learn without perceptible effort because they are constantly hearing others recite. In every year of her life there had been days and months when she had been unable to look at a lesson-book. She was ambitious, and it fretted her to be behind others of her age. So she hurriedly mastered a principle and

then pushed on to another, neglecting to practice the details of working out, which are one's voucher for the possession of knowledge. Then, too, inactivity had made her indolent, and she had that to struggle against.

"I wish I knew of some child who would come and recite with you," said Mrs. Roderick. "I think I could teach two as well as one."

"You have enough on you as it is," said Anna, warmly. "I'll stop having lazy times and reading stories, and then I'll do better."

"Well, perhaps something will turn up."

Clifford grinned at the familiar phrase. When a Roderick mounted the wish-horse, the others always sympathetically whipped and coaxed till they thought the ride long enough. Then they quietly offered the phrase as a stepping-stone to the ground, so that the coming down would not be so hard. They preferred not to deceive themselves or each other with false hopes, and so a pretended use of Micawber's support always made them laugh. And a laugh eases troublesome matters.

Two days later the Rodericks' city home on Sixteenth Street was turned topsy-turvy by the household goods which had come by freight from The

Grove. The geography was the first book unpacked. Anna declared it was disagreeably forward, but she endeavored to use it. After the summer of play her mind was more balky and refractory than usual. And Africa was a hot subject for the middle of a Washington September, which is usually insufferably warm.

Clifford's manner was doleful as he wandered into the room, but he brightened as he saw Anna with a book.

"Please read to me," he begged. "I haven't anything to do."

All his life Clifford had had nothing to do. He had many toys, but he did not like to play with them alone. Perhaps it was because he was sure that Anna knew of so many delightful things for a little boy to do, and generally liked to help him do them.

"What shall I read?" asked Anna.

"*'Trotty's Christmas Tree,'*" eagerly.

"Oh, yes, of course; and *'Patty's Christmas Pies'* and *'The Pussy-Cat, the Parrot and the Monkey,'* and all the rest of *'Christmas Elves.'* Will you ever want anything new? I'm sure you know every bit of that book by heart!"

Clifford laughed as he took the book from the bookcase and settled himself on the broad window-seat. Then Anna proceeded to do two things at once. She propped the geography against the window and opened the story book in her lap. As she read aloud the tiresomely familiar words she silently fixed the facts of her lesson in her mind.

“Then Trotty went up to the duck and said, ‘Duck, can you show me the way to Santa Tause’s house?’—*Victoria Nyanza is the principal lake of Africa, the Nile is the longest river and—*” Here she was uncertain of the story, and paid strict attention to that. “The horse said to Trotty, ‘If you give me a bite of your apple I will show you the way to Santa Tause’s house—’ *The Atlas Mountains are in northern Africa. The country is bounded on the north by—*”

Two stories were finished and the lesson well learned when Mrs. Roderick entered the room.

“Well, Anna, something has really turned up right at our door-step.”

“A scholar for you?” laughingly asked Anna. She suspected pleasantry.

“No; a school for you. There is to be a little

private one on Tenth Streeth, six squares from here. Janet could take you every morning in your chair as she goes to school. The young lady seems very nice ; she is Miss Clara Gannet's niece. They thought, as you were able to attend Miss Clara's school before, that you might begin again. Would you like it ?”

“ Oh, yes, indeed !” Anna drew a long breath, but then she looked up doubtfully. “ Can we afford it ?”

The “ we ” was suggestive of the mutual confidence between parents and children. Each member of the family had a correct idea of the income and expenses, and so there was no careless begging and thoughtless extravagance or ignorance of the value of money, even with Clifford.

“ I think we can manage,” said Mrs. Roderick cheerfully. “ Your dresses will do, won't they ?”

“ Oh, yes, they are plenty good enough.”

Anna did not sigh, but she remembered that in the middle of the summer she had allowed her fancy to choose the color, material and style of making the new winter dress she should probably have. Her passion for fine dress was a trial to her, because she felt it was so unsuitable in an invalid.

She enjoyed Janet's wardrobe more than her own, because in her sister beauty of person matched beauty of dress ; yet if she herself was not suitably and prettily dressed she was extremely uncomfortable, and had to battle with herself to keep from being cross.

But more than the loss of a dress could easily be borne for the sake of going to school, where she would be compelled to "keep on" or be shamed before the scholars. It was hard to wait till the time set. She marked off the days on the calendar, and when the day came she was up and dressed before the rising-bell rang. She did not let any one see that she was excited, but when Janet had her in the street she deliberately spoke to herself. The wheels drowned the sound as she said slowly :

"It is really me, but I can hardly believe it !"

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL.

THE grassy yard in front of the school-house was longer than the average city yard. The house was a three-story brick, and the one-story wooden bow-window, and the porch all the way across, gave it a pleasing appearance. Janet put the wheel-chair up the one step of the porch without difficulty.

The young school-teacher answered the bell-ring. "And this is Anna Roderick," she said. The tone of her voice favorably impressed Anna; it was so composedly pleasant.

"Yes, and this is my sister Janet, Miss Gannet."

"Can I help you up that step? Oh, that was easily done. Come right into the school-room."

It was a back room with a combination window and door which led into the back yard. There were no desks. In the middle of the room was a table with a pretty green cover, and comfortable-

looking chairs stood around. A blackboard on an easel was the only thing that suggested school.

When Anna had unbuttoned her coat Miss Gannet forestalled Janet's aid, and pulled in the right direction and jerked at the necessary time, as if she was accustomed to doing it every day. Anna had found most people extremely stupid when they tried to take off an invalid's coat.

"You are on your way to school, I believe," said Miss Gannet to Janet.

"Yes, I am in the first year of the High School."

"I graduated from there four years ago;" and while the two talked about the teachers of the High School, Anna studied her own teacher.

Light hair becomingly arranged, grey eyes, a pretty color in the plump cheeks, a pleasant smile and gentle manner, and a brown dress that suited in every way. "I am sure I shall like her," thought Anna.

"Well, good-by, Anna. I'll be here as soon after two o'clock as I can. You will have one scholar after school hours, Miss Gannet," said Janet.

"Kept in for badness every day," added Anna. It was the first revelation of the fun-loving spirit

which was to teach the teacher something new about invalids.

"I'm not afraid you will give me trouble," said Miss Gannet, and then she went to answer a second ring.

Anna frowned and sighed. "Like everybody else she expects me to be angelic, and I suppose I've got to be! I 'spose she'd be stunned if I should let out any of the 'Old Nick.' I'm just awfully sick and tired of being a model!"

A tall and rather stout girl of eleven entered the room with Miss Gannet. Anna glanced at the big braid of tawny-colored hair tied up at the back of the head, and immediately knew that it would go below the waist when allowed to hang. "Why, Nettie!" she exclaimed.

"Hullo, Anna! I met Janet and she said you were here."

"Do you know each other?" asked Miss Gannet, much surprised.

"Oh, yes. We go to the same place every summer," replied Anna.

"We've played dolls together and had lots of fun, haven't we, Anna?"

The other two scholars came together at exactly

four minutes of nine. Nettie Pauline greeted them as old friends because they had all been schoolmates in another school. Anna examined them with eager interest.

She instantly liked Daisy Joy and her dark hair, rosy cheeks, saucy nose and the merry grey eyes that looked with frank curiosity and interest at the invalid. Bessie May's short golden hair, regular features and fair complexion were equally charming, but the blue eyes looked coolly and without interest at Anna.

"I don't think I shall like *her*, because—well, I don't think she will like me," thought Anna. "That is, I can't be as friendly with the beauty as with the dear, because the beauty won't want me to. But they're both going to be *so* interesting. I can see they're very chummy. Well, Nettie has always been lovely to me, and I don't expect them to take me up."

"Isn't she pale and sickly? I do hope she won't be cross and horrid," whispered Bessie to Daisy.

Just then Anna laughed at something Nettie said, and her plain, quiet face was wonderfully brightened.

"She looks weak and proper, but I believe there's some fun in her," answered Daisy. "Maybe we can drag it out. I don't believe she will bother us."

After the opening exercises, Miss Gannet sat down at the table. "Now we must have a little examination in order to find out what to study."

Daisy and Bessie groaned aloud and Anna trembled violently.

"You needn't be afraid. It won't be bad," Miss Gannet smiled, as she handed a book to Bessie and pointed to a piece. "I want to see how you all read."

Bessie stumbled over but few words, and rendered meaning and punctuation very well. Daisy slighted punctuation and seemed determined to get all the words in one breath. Nettie mispronounced so many words and changed so many others that Daisy and Bessie giggled. Because of long practice and love for it, Anna read confidently, understandingly and correctly. Her heart glowed with gladness and pride when she saw Miss Gannet's look of satisfaction.

"Well, you *can* read," announced Daisy, when she had finished staring.

"Indeed she can. I have heard her before," said Nettie.

Bessie looked coldly at Anna and said nothing. Although she was the youngest, she would have been the best reader in the school if Anna had not read so well.

"Now try poetry," said Miss Gannet. No comment was made until each girl had read a poem. Then Daisy snickered, and in a minute all were convulsed with laughter. Not even Anna had been able to keep from reading in a sing-song manner.

"I don't like poetry a bit, and I can't read it. I think it's so silly to work over a thing till you make it rhyme when you could just write down what you want to say in two minutes."

"I *like* poetry, and that's the best I can read it. I just believe it was made to read that way." Bessie laughed gaily at the absurdness of her statement.

"Oh, Miss Ivah, *wasn't* that dreadful!" exclaimed Daisy.

"Miss *Ivah*!" repeated Nettie.

"Yes, Miss *Ivah*—and you'd better say it too. You needn't think we're going to call her Miss Gannet. She isn't big enough, is she, Bessie?"

This was said aloud, with perfect gravity and matter-of-course daring. Bessie looked at her teacher's surprised face, laughed, and said, with bewitching candor,

"No, she *isn't*. We'll say Miss Ivah because you're nice, and we like you, and aren't afraid of you."

Miss Ivah laughed, but dignity was added to her gentle manner as she said, "I meant to ask you all to say Miss Ivah, so I won't feel so old. You know it is but a few years since I was a school-girl. Now I will give you some test examples. Nettie, please work yours on the board while the others watch."

Nettie worked quickly and sat down.

"Do you all think that is worked correctly?" asked Miss Ivah.

Bessie raised her hand. "I think the principle is right, but I never knew that six times nine are forty-eight."

Nettie laughed as she jumped up and corrected the mistake. Bessie took her place at the board with an easy, confident air, and tidily chalk-marked her example without pausing a moment. She received with a self-satisfied smile Miss Ivah's warm "That's right."

"Huh! You ain't the only one that can do a sum right," said Daisy; and though she hesitated, she, too, worked correctly. "Arithmetic's as easy as anything to Bessie, and she *likes* it. *I* don't like any old study."

"Nettie, will you please go to the board and work as Anna directs?"

Nettie was perfectly willing, but Anna was not at all ready. She had stared at the slip of paper, and read the words over and over: "*A man bought 7 tons of hay, at \$15 a ton, and sold the same for \$20 more than he gave for it; what did he receive?*"

"Oh, why can't I go right at it! I'm sure I've done that before."

"Well, Anna?" said Miss Ivah.

"Why, Miss Ivah, I—I don't—I am afraid I—" she stammered, and desperately finished, "I can't do it." The surprise on all the faces goaded her to explanations. "I feel as though I know how—but somehow—you see I haven't studied for so long—"

Bessie sniffed audibly and Daisy said bluntly, "Why, that's as easy as can be. Anybody can do that in two minutes!"

This was too much. Never had Anna minded

suffering as she minded the suffering of that minute. Every nerve tingled, and she was unable to control herself. Much to her disgust, she put her head down on the desk and sobbed hard.

"I *never* cry, and why did I have to do it now! I'd rather they'd think me a dunce than a *cry-baby*!" she thought. "They shan't puzzle over me long. I *will* stop."

In a few minutes she composed herself and answered all questions about history and geography. But she did not dare to look at the others, and for the rest of that day she ached all over and shivered at times.

It was half-past one when Miss Ivah opened a book and smiled a queer little smile. Each scholar wondered what new trial awaited them.

"I have quite a fair idea of how you've studied other people's books. Now you must write something yourselves. I shall read to you Charles Kingsley's 'Three Fishers,' and I want you each to present me with a prose edition of it. You will have just half an hour."

"Oh, you horrid thing!" cried Daisy.

"I never can," solemnly said Bessie.

"What's the good in that? It's the worst of all.

You know how well enough, without our showing you." Nettie's tone was sullen.

Anna did not know how well she could transpose, because she had never tried. But she knew she would at least have no difficulty in making her mind go at it.

Miss Ivah put on a resolute look and requested silent obedience. Four pens scratched and four heads were scratched till the clock struck two.

"School is dismissed," said Miss Ivah.

"I've just put down the last word," said Anna. She had worked hard, but it had not been at all hard to do.

"Mercy!" said Bessie. "I finished long ago. I've been writing a letter to Daisy telling her about the private school I go to."

"Let me see what you could do so quickly."

Bessie bowed gracefully as she surrendered the paper. At a glance, Miss Ivah read the bald statement of facts. Her mouth twitched, and she shook her head at the unrepentant scribe.

"I know it isn't good, but I can't make it any gooder."

"Nettie's and mine aren't any better," triumphantly announced Daisy. "We never had to do that stuff."

"Now *this* is the way I wanted you all to do it." Miss Ivah handed Anna's paper to the others. "I am afraid none of you tried. I know you can do better. Anna's is very good. I am delighted with it."

"Yes, that is fine. I guess you are bright," said Daisy cheerfully.

"And the rest of us need dunces' caps. Miss Ivah, you have them all ready for to-morrow," added Bessie, with a giggle.

"I am older than the rest of you, and I have read more," said Anna hastily. She was not entirely pleased with Miss Ivah's praise. It was comforting and pleasant, of course; but she hated to have an example held up to her and to be held up as an example. She would rather have completely failed again than to give those girls cause to dislike her.

"Did you ever read how to do that?" demanded Daisy.

"Oh, no."

"Then don't try to be modest. You're smart and we ain't, so—good-by." She had been putting on her coat and hat, and now pulled Bessie out the door.

“Good-by, Anna. See you to-morrow,” said Nettie, and she quickly followed the others.

Miss Ivah and Anna exchanged smiles, which expressed their knowledge of the charming trouble the girls would be.

“Aren’t they nice and funny? Miss Ivah, do you think it would be fair for you to give me some test examples to work out to-night? I can have them explained.”

“Why, certainly. Your mother said you would need especial help in arithmetic. I will select some problems while you are waiting for your sister.”

CHAPTER III.

LUNCH BASKETS AND PRETTY NEIGHBORS.

“ I THINK your sister is awfully pretty,” said Daisy.

It was the half-hour recess for luncheon. Daisy had forgotten to bring anything from home, and was sharing the contents of Anna’s large basket.

“ Do you ?” responded Anna, feeling rather embarrassed, and wondering what she was expected to say.

“ Yes, of course ; don’t you ?”

“ Why, yes—I do,” stammered Anna. This matter of fact frankness was new to her. She had always considered a sister a part of one’s self, and therefore not to be discussed.

“ Is she as nice as she is pretty ?” queried Daisy, with her mouth full of preserved cherries. “ Now my sister is nice when she don’t boss, but she’s not a bit pretty.”

Anna felt she could not have said that about her sister, if she did boss, and was not pretty. If Janet

had been horrid she would never have mentioned the fact; but she did not think it worth while to be indignant at the question, so she said quietly :

“She is very nice, and she never bosses.” It seemed to her that additional praise of a sister would be in bad taste.

“My! Emma does, but I never mind her. She’s great fun, though. She don’t try to be big and ain’t a bit stuck up. We have a pear-tree in our yard, and we each have a limb and call it our wheel—we haven’t any bicycles, you know; Papa won’t let us. Emma rides her wheel as often as we do, and thinks it’s fun. She’s seventeen, too.”

“She must be lovely!” said Anna admiringly. “I like girls to climb trees and run and do things like that.” It was what she would do if she could, for there was a wildness of spirit in the quiet girl. Again she wished that Janet would be tom-boyish, but she hastened to banish the wish, and of course did not speak it. “Who are ‘we’?” she asked.

“Oh, the boys, Rob and Lowry. They are fifteen and thirteen. We have lots of fun together.”

Anna thought Daisy pronounced the word as though it was spelled *Laurie*, and she was pleas-

antly excited. All of her romantic ideas were centred in the boy Laurie in Miss Alcott's "Little Women." After her family, of course, he was the nicest person she ever knew or read of. Now here she was going to school with a girl who had a brother named Laurie! It was certainly thrilling. And Robert had always been a favorite name. "I wish I had some big brothers," she said enviously.

Bessie was having a tussle with Nettie, but at this heresy she paused. "I don't. One brother is one too many for me. They are the biggest teases you ever saw."

"I have a little brother, so I know that. But I don't mind teasing, because I'm never teased."

"Oh, you're wonderful," said Bessie laughingly. But Anna determined to repress all such recollections in the future. She hastily asked,

"What grades are your brothers in?"

"They aren't in any grades. They are at the Columbia Prep. None of us have ever been in a public school," answered Daisy scornfully. "Why, there are Jews and old Italians, and Dutch children and Irish, and lots of common things at public school."

Anna had views about the value and dignity of the public school, and resented this tirade. But she sensibly bowed to the prejudice, and smiled as she said :

“And negroes in with the whites in New York. But there are no muffs or dudes or stupids. You have to study in the public school or you are left behind ; and when you’ve been left behind a few grades, you feel ashamed to be with small children, and you go to private school. You see when you leave the public school, the teacher gets her pay just the same. But the private school-teacher pets you and makes you believe you know a lot, so she can fill her pocket-book.”

This was so astounding that Daisy received it as a joke, and laughed with Anna. Of course, no one could say that and mean it. Family custom and solemn discussion forbade belief in the soberness of such a statement.

“Have your brothers been at Prep. all their lives ?” inquired Anna demurely.

“The idea ! They started at Miss Clara Gannet’s, where Nettie and Bessie and I were last year.

Anna started. “Why, I went to her school a

little while before Nettie began. Oh! why how funny I didn't think before! A Joy boy was at the same desk with me,—they were double, you know,—but his name was *Lowry*, not Laurie."

"That's what I said. He hates anybody to call him Laurie, and almost everybody does. But ain't it queer? Rob and Lowry and Anna at Miss Clara's, and then Bessie and Nettie and I, and now Nettie and Anna and Bessie and I here.—Isn't Miss Clara lovely?"

"Indeed she is," said Anna, absentmindedly. She was busy with recollections of happy times at the other school, which she had almost forgotten. She was so young then and had not noticed much, but now many incidents came back to her with added interest. With warm gratitude she recalled how kindly Lowry had taught her how to find places on the map while carefully hiding his surprise at her ignorance. Only now did she realize that he must have been surprised. She remembered the day she deliberately rebelled against carefulness, and bounced her rubber-ball on the window-sill when the window was open. Of course, the ball bounced out of the second-story window into the long grass of the play-yard.

Lowry hunted long and willingly until he found it, and then Anna cheerfully accepted her limit. Once Robert secretly handed her a "lozenger." As she put it aside to gather sweetness by standing, a big boy whispered that it was nothing but stone. She was delighted with the joke and the clever imitation, and half-wished she had tried to bite before she was told, so that Robert might be delighted too. The Joy boys went home to luncheon, and when they returned often presented crackers in the shape of butterflies, bees and cats to Anna and another girl, who proudly pinned them on their dresses. Anna kept a butterfly at home till it crumbled. On special occasions Lowry recited a piece of poetry, which declared he never would smoke, drink or chew. Once he declined to declaim on the plea of forgetfulness. Anna found the piece in a temperance paper at home, and had the pleasure of reading as he recited, and prompting him once.

Then there were two dreary weeks of sickness brightened by a beautiful bouquet of flowers sent by the Joy boys. With great timidity and labor Anna had penned a note of thanks. When Miss Clara called on the sick scholar she flushed Anna with

amazement and pride by announcing that the Joy boys were extremely proud of their note, and had showed it to everybody at school. But even then Anna had half-doubted Miss Clara's understanding of the matter. After she left the school she was driving with her mother one day. While she watched a stranger on one side of the street, the Joy boys passed on the other and bowed to Mrs. Roderick. Anna bravely hid her disappointment, but she had longed to see how much they had changed in a year and how they tipped their hats.

With a long sigh she dismissed pleasant memories. Then she smiled to herself as she saw that her slight acquaintance spoiled the romance and severed connection with Miss Alcott's Laurie. But these boys of real life were interesting; she hoped Daisy would talk of them often.

"I wonder what kind of flower that is," said Nettie, as she gazed at a flower-pot set on a post of the back fence.

"I'm going to see." Daisy flung up the window and tried to find the way to open the lower part.

"Oh, I wouldn't go there!" involuntarily exclaimed Anna. She thought that just because they went to school in one room they had no

right to spy on the other parts of the establishment. Even the being present when some one else did it made her feel ashamed.

Opposition was the spur Daisy needed to overcome difficulty. She could not find the door-opening, so climbed over it. She examined the flower long and closely, just because she guessed that Anna wished she would hurry back. In the middle of a pantomime expressing her deep admiration, the sharp bark of a dog startled her. Up to the window she rushed, followed by a shaggy little Skye terrier, which quivered and barked with rage at her transgression.

"Help me in quick! Oh, *girls!*" she cried. There was real fright in her tone.

Nettie grabbed and pulled, while Bessie bunched herself on the floor and laughed at this funny end of the bravado.

"You always were scared of a dog!" she gasped. "The idea! Here, doggie, nice fellow! You want some company, don't you? We must have a nice play together." She had begun to climb out when Miss Ivah entered the room.

"What is the matter? Why, Fritz, you must not bark that way. What makes him?"

"Why, I was looking at your cactus, and he came up behind and frightened me to death!" explained Daisy, with an injured air, while her eyes twinkled at the girls. "Why *do* you keep a horrid old dog?"

"Fritz is a well-behaved dog. It is only when he thinks others are misbehaving that he barks so. The cactus will be prettier later. I expected to have the pleasure of showing it to you all," said Miss Ivah pleasantly. As she left them she had again the resolute look the scholars knew by this time.

They never once recognized the fact that they were in a school *under* Miss Ivah Gannet; it was *with* her in all study, play and idleness. Of course she was ahead of them in age, size and school-learning, but still she was close beside them. They were not kept on tip-toe by fear of punishment. They loved her enough to tease her and cause the look of half rebuke and half amusement.

"Let's go out on the porch," proposed Nettie. "It is nice and warm; I can take Anna out. Oh, you haven't finished your lunch!"

"I don't want any more." Anna put a glass half-filled with preserves into her basket and shut the lid.

"You don't? Well, I do."

Daisy snatched the glass, and then had a struggle with Bessie. As they went through the hall to the porch they compromised on putting a spoonful first into one mouth and then into the other.

"Did your mother preserve those cherries?" asked Nettie.

"Yes. We picked them last summer at The Grove. We would take the carriage and hunt along the country roads for cherry trees outside of fences. Clifford and the colored boy would climb the trees and pick and throw down branches to me. Nettie, you were with us several times—do you remember the time Clifford tumbled in the muddy ditch, and then had to lie out in the hot sun to dry?"

"Oh, look!" cried Daisy.

In the next yard there was a large oak tree. Against the trunk stood a rustic seat which was half hid by the dainty gowns of two young ladies. In feature, form and coloring they were exact opposites. The brunette with red cheeks was fanning vigorously. The blonde with cheeks like peach-blossoms was lounging and enjoying the breeze. Now and then the thick leaves overhead were

stirred, and allowed a sunbeam to dance on their heads.

A little sigh of delight and admiration escaped from each girl. In an intentionally loud tone Daisy asked,

“Which do you think the prettiest?”

“Hush!” murmured Anna. She was sure that beautiful people would be embarrassed by open notice. But the pretty neighbors had heard. The brunette looked amused, and the blonde gave a friendly smile which each girl took to herself and returned with a grin.

And then the cruelty of life! The school-bell rang and the admirers had to leave the admired ones outside. They wished fervently that their school was in the front room, so that they might watch as they recited their lessons.

The next day, before the clock finished striking twelve, Anna, with her lunch-basket, was being rolled to the front porch. The preserves sweetened suspense as they waited and watched for their pretty neighbors.

“We don’t know their names; but then maybe they’d be ugly. We can call ’em—Anna, what do they call people with light and dark hair? Bessie’s

one of 'em and I'm the other, but you and Nettie ain't either."

"Blonde and brunette. That's just the thing to call them. Its good you thought of it. When we mean them both we can say 'The Couple.' Oh, there!"

The objects of their admiration, clothed in finer dress, came out and gracefully seated themselves. After a smile of recognition they did not notice the children, who scanned them so eagerly and discussed them so thoroughly.

"I think The Brunette is the prettiest, but The Blonde is the pleasantest looking," stated Anna. They were hotly arguing about this when a handsome youth entered the next yard and was warmly welcomed by The Couple. He settled himself on the grass at their feet and proceeded to say funny things. The frequent bursts of loud laughter were tantalizing to the envious children.

"Isn't he handsome?" demanded Nettie.

"Yes," replied Anna, for the others were speechless. "But isn't he a little—well, not flashy, exactly, but—I don't know—"

"I don't think you do. There isn't *anything* the matter with him," said Daisy decidedly. "I wonder which one he comes to see?"

"Both, I guess," said Bessie.

"Not much," laughed Nettie. "It's one or the other. Oh, there's that horrid bell! I think we ought to have an hour for lunch. I say,—maybe Miss Ivah can tell us about The Couple."

But Miss Ivah had no information to give.

"Don't you know *anything* about them?" persisted Bessie. "Why, you live right next to them!"

That queer little smile came to Miss Ivah's face. "Well, I do know that when we haven't time to make a dessert for dinner we send in there for home-made pies. I've often seen a row of round things cooling in the back yard. I can't say that your pretty friends made them, because I never inquired. It seems to me the pies would burn while the young ladies were in the front yard."

The scholars' admiration shivered under these cold facts. It was depressing to find that their queens made pies for sale, or even had a family engaged in that small business. In her own way, each girl reasoned that perfectly lovely and adorable creatures who made pies for sale, or idled and dressed finely while their mother made pies for sale, were equally disappointing. But they all

wanted to have faith in the neighbors and enjoy their prettiness, so they said not a word. They resolved to wait till they had surely discovered the baker.

“They may be only boarding with the folks who make pies,” said Bessie. The others blessed her for the suggestion.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW SCHOOL-ROOM AND SCHOLAR.

ANNA was usually the first to enter school, but one morning she found the girls assembled on the front porch.

"Oh, girls!" she said eagerly as she was wheeled up. "I met The Blonde around the corner and she spoke to me! Her smile is just perfectly lovely when you're close to it! She had a market-basket, and was with a horrid old middle-aged man. He didn't look a bit like her father. Suppose he is her husband!"

"The idea!" Daisy was indignant. "She wouldn't marry an old man, I know."

"Unless he had money," put in Nettie.

"If he had money she wouldn't bake pies for sale!" retorted Daisy.

"Look here!" said Bessie tragically. "If she boards, she wouldn't be going to market. Oh, dear,—*Anna!* Why did you have to go and see her?"

"Your blonde beauty must bleach her hair," said Janet carelessly. "Nettie, can you take Anna the rest of the way? I am late." Janet hurried off without noticing the sad silence her words had caused. Admiration had another chill.

"Maybe this is a rarity," called Daisy after Janet.

"It certainly *is*," Janet laughed back.

"Anyway we'll think so, because we don't know she bleaches," continued Daisy to the girls. She was ahead of them as they went in and paused at the first door, instead of going on to the second. "Have you ever looked in here, Anna?" she asked carelessly.

Anna was horrified, and her face showed it.

"Well, I'm going to look, and then you can see." Daisy calmly turned the knob. "Miss Ivah's up-stairs."

"Daisy, don't!" cried Anna. "It is not—it's not—*honorable*!" She felt that she must use strong words to prevent any more waywardness. This would be simply disgraceful!

Daisy flung open the door, turned, and quickly rolled Anna into the room. Anna shut her eyes tightly, but opened them immediately, because she knew that was priggish. Then she was bewildered

by the appearance of the room and the immoderate laughter of Nettie and Bessie.

“It ain’t honorable, ain’t it? You mean it’s very *dishonorable*, don’t you? Well, Miss Proper-Prim, I guess I know what’s right as well as you do. If a girl can’t look in her own school-room, I’d like to know who can?”

On the wall hung a large map of the United States, on the mantel was a small globe, against the wall stood a table filled with books, the largest of which was Webster’s Dictionary. Six desks and chairs faced a table and chair at the side of the room, and in the corner stood the easel with the blackboard.

“Is Miss Ivah going to have two school-rooms?” asked Anna. When she understood, she was delighted with the change and the mischief. She thought it was lovely to have people play jokes on one. Daisy must have felt that Anna liked her, but she was sharp enough to see that Anna disapproved of some of her lawless acts. In consequence, her saucy nose had often been elevated a trifle higher. She had seized this chance of retaliation so that she could allow her nose to come down to the level of good-fellowship.

"I meant to put this chair against the wall for company, so Anna's chair can roll in its place," said Miss Ivah. "There, you fit in nicely. Nettie will take the seat back of you, Bessie the one beside you, and Daisy back of Bessie. I think it is better to have the two seats by the window unoccupied."

Anna was dismayed, because she thought Bessie would prefer another arrangement. She was surprised to receive immediately a nod and smile and a calm request for the loan of a sponge. Anna was almost sure that Bessie would not borrow from any one she disliked.

"Oh, Miss Ivah! You have put me where I can't talk to Bessie," said Daisy.

"Well?" said Miss Ivah.

"I don't like that."

"I do," she answered smilingly. "During school hours is not the time for talking."

"But I must, sometimes, or I can't live. Miss Ivah, I will be compelled to write notes." There was mischievous warning in Daisy's tone, but her face was perfectly straight.

At this time Miss Ivah was perplexed by the increasing disorder in the school-room. Daisy

and Bessie would not stop whispering about lessons and all other subjects. They would make remarks aloud and then declare with pretty penitence that they could not remember they were in school. "Miss Ivah, what in the world does this mean?"—"Well, if that river isn't the hardest thing to find. Anna, have you found it?"—"Miss Ivah, don't you think La France roses are beautiful? We have some at home. I'll bring you one to-morrow."—"Look here! *do* you think a girl thirteen years old ought to twist up her hair?" These were the abrupt words that broke order and silence. Nettie was soon demoralized by the prevailing restlessness, and Anna often succumbed. She knew that if she always refused to answer remarks and never made advances they would think her a prig. Sometimes Miss Ivah had considered the disorder to be a sort of epidemic which must run its course. Reproofs, appeals and punishments seemed to be added fun. It was because of all this that the resolute look came into her face at Daisy's mention of notes.

"I am sure you will not do that. I must speak to all of you about your behavior. I hope that to-day and hereafter you will try to stop whispering and making remarks aloud. We are to have a new

scholar, and I would not like her to have the impression that we are a lawless set of savages playing at school."

The small matter of behavior was at once set aside by exclamations and questions about the new scholar.

"How old is she?"

"I'm just sure she'll spoil our nice times!"

"Is she nice?"

"What *did* you take another for? I'm sure we're enough to manage."

"What's her name?"

Miss Ivah waited till they realized they were gaining nothing by talk. "She is nine years old. She is good-natured, and will not spoil anything. I am equal to managing another if you girls do as you should. Her name is Mattie King. When she was little she had a sunstroke, and she will be much behind you in studies, because it is hard for her to learn. Now I want to ask a question. Will you each do all you can to make school pleasant for her?"

"To our dying day," was Daisy's way of answering for all, and Miss Ivah was satisfied.

"She lives on this square, but she cannot come



A NEW SCHOLAR.

till ten o'clock to-day," said Miss Ivah, and then she tapped the bell for order.

When the clock struck ten, and there came a knock at the door, every head was raised, and curiosity was rampant.

"Girls, this is Mattie King. Mattie, these are your schoolmates." The tall, slim girl with short brown hair watched her teacher as the introduction was made, and then gravely surveyed the girls. Bessie smiled at her, and Nettie stepped forward to help untie a refractory ribbon.

"She'd be right pretty if she was dressed up and her mouth was not so large," thought Daisy, as she stood up and bowed low. Aloud she said, "Happy to meet you, Miss King."

This greeting puzzled the newcomer until Anna laughed, and said confidentially, "Don't mind her, Mattie. She's only trying to copy her elders."

"Mattie may have the visitor's chair to-day. Then to-morrow I would like Nettie to take one of the seats by the window, so Mattie can sit back of Anna. I think Nettie can best be trusted just now."

"Miss Ivah, I hate you," said Daisy.

"I never thought you'd be mean," said Bessie.

"Nettie will *have* to talk now, because she shan't know what's going on in the street and keep it to herself." Bessie did not choose to let Miss Ivah answer, so she hastily added, "Mattie, it's a pity your name doesn't begin with *C*. You know here we have three of the first four letters of the alphabet, *A*, *B* and *D*. You ought to fit in between."

"Well, if you want me to, I'll hunt for a girl with a name like that and bring her here to school," said Mattie obligingly, and in perfect faith.

There was a suppressed giggle, and then an apparent prolonged scrap over a lead pencil.

"It would be nice if you could find one. I guess Miss Ivah would take another scholar. Only you must get somebody very nice," said Anna.

"Let us have quiet, girls," said Miss Ivah. As each minute passed and no one trespassed, she felt as though she was witnessing an exciting race. Would the clock tick off all the minutes preceding twelve before a remark escaped from one of the girls? She opened her watch, kept it open a few minutes, and then closed it with a snap.

"Twelve o'clock," she radiantly announced.

"I'm faint, 'cause I've been so good," gasped

Daisy. "What have you got to eat, Anna? Bessie's got some dandy cake. Landy! Where did you get all those?"

As Anna opened her lunch-basket, five or six small cakes tumbled out over her desk. Daisy boldly peeped into the basket and found it was filled with cakes and preserves.

"We have a big cracker-box full of them at home, and we're rather tired of them. We're afraid we won't eat them before they're stale," said Anna, trying not to speak proudly.

"Oh, you are? Here, Bessie. We always like to help people, don't we?" Daisy grabbed the basket. "Here's three for you, Nettie, and three for Bessie, and three—"

"Please leave a few," begged Anna. "I want to give some to Mattie when she comes back."

"Here are some, then. You'd better hide 'em. You don't want any, because you are tired of them. Bring some more to-morrow and we'll help you again."

"You ought to be ashamed!" cried Bessie, as she gathered up her share. "Anna will think we haven't any manners. It's nice in her to give us half of her lunch, but we mustn't let her do it any more."

"Yes, we must. Anna brought those cakes for us, anyway. Didn't you, Anna? I told you so. It's a charity to Nettie. She lives in an old hotel and they never give her a decent lunch! What have you got to-day? Ugh! Fried bananas on bought rolls. How nasty!"

"You needn't talk," retorted Nettie. "You live in a home, and half the time you don't bring anything at all."

"You're too fat now, but you need a few pounds more because you're too fresh!" and Daisy pounded with her fists while Nettie shrieked for mercy. "I am expected home for lunch, but when you all beg me to stay you have to feed me."

"She's too lazy to walk home," said Bessie. "I live right back of her on N Street, and I'd walk home every day. But we have dinner at two, and it's nicer to bring a little lunch than to go home and have it by myself. After all my hard work, I *must* have something at recess."

The weather was too cold for The Couple to sit in the yard, so their adorers had not secured any more knowledge of the pretty neighbors or any clue to the identity of the baker. While they waited, they believed. They had talked of uniting

pocket-money and buying a pie for luncheon ; but they were afraid The Blonde or The Brunette would answer their ring and they did not want to take the chance of embarrassing the beauties.

“ I don't believe it's kind to Miss Ivah to be so good,” remarked Daisy.

“ Why ?” came a surprised chorus.

“ Because it's made me feel that I'm going to do something dreadful to-morrow.”

CHAPTER V.

MATTIE FINDS LETTER C.

“**M**ISS IVAH, there’s a girl lives around the corner from the Pension Office and her name’s Cora, and she says she’s coming here to school,” announced Mattie one morning, as she entered the school-room. “Me and her had lots of fun yesterday. We was playing we was rowing in the boats and riding on the horses they have up on the outside of the office—whole yards of ’em.”

“Bessie, there’s your letter C,” said Anna.

“I suppose she will speak to me about it before she comes, won’t she?” said Miss Ivah laughingly.

“I don’t know. She’s coming to visit school to-day,” replied Mattie, as she took off her hat and smoothed down her short locks. “I told her we have fine times here. She said she had to go somewhere, and she might as well come here.”

“Well, I never!” cried Daisy.

“Miss Ivah, do you know her?” asked Nettie.

“I have a speaking acquaintance with her grandmother. I presume she will bring some one with her to make arrangements—if she comes. Mattie may have misunderstood.”

“That’s what she said. She asked me about the girls here, and I said they was the nicest girls in the world, and the one that can’t walk is the most fun of all.”

This undisguised praise embarrassed her schoolmates. They knew that she had not spoken for their benefit, because she was entirely occupied with Miss Ivah. Nevertheless, they twisted and wiggled in their seats, and wished they had done more to deserve Mattie’s liking for them. Anna did not dare lean over the book she was studying. She was obliged to watch the single fly travelling over the ceiling, so that the moisture in her eyes would not overflow the eyelids.

Mattie had a deliberate, honest way of speaking, always saying what she meant, and not any more than she meant. She never joked, but the other girls’ sportiveness delighted her. Her honesty would have kept her mystified if Anna had not tactfully managed to let her know when joking was in the air. Mattie was a class of one in all studies,

but she was a valuable addition to the games and plays at recess. The girls sometimes imposed on her good nature and her perfect faith in all they said, but they often begged for the privilege of hearing and correcting her lessons and were always ready to help her. They were as much pleased as Mattie when they could scratch a huge but shaky *R* on all the simple examples on her slate. Miss Ivah found that this occupation forestalled much untimely mischief.

Anna and Mattie were industrious partners in the business of good will. From the first, Mattie was eager to wait on Anna and serve her in any way. The other girls had always anticipated Anna's needs and, in a charmingly matter-of-fact way, provided her with a moistened sponge or a drink of water, or whatever she needed, as instinctively as they provided for themselves. But Mattie continually asked to do a thing before Anna knew that she should want it done. Anna felt the protective feeling Mattie had for her, and was touched and grateful, though such constant, glaring service was really rather wearisome. She felt that Mattie needed protection in another way; and, as she longed to help people, it was a comfort to know

that she could help Mattie a little, even though Mattie herself would never understand.

No visitor came that day. But a few days later, Miss Ivah announced that some one had come to make arrangements, and that letter *C* was surely coming as a scholar the next Monday.

"It's only fair to Miss Ivah to give the new scholar a good impression of us all," Anna ventured to say.

"So it is, Miss Proper-Prim," answered Daisy with a grimace. "We'll be good little girls. Will grandmother give us some caramels if we do?"

Janet's chocolate caramels were justly celebrated at the school, and Anna despised herself for one of the reasons which made her deny herself a taste of them at home. She liked to share with her school-mates and she wanted them to know Janet's skill, but she was afraid her greed would have stifled those motives if there had not been another. She knew it was rather small to want the girls to be impressed by her possession of such delicious candy, and yet the wish was there.

"You don't deserve a reward for just doing your duty," she replied. "Besides, giving beforehand

would be too risky. I don't believe you could be good if you tried."

Cora Smith came, and her agreeable characteristics were speedily discovered and valued by all. Her brown hair was just long enough to lie about her shoulders. One morning it would be tightly braided; the next, outrageously curled. Her voice was sharp, her dresses short, and her legs thin. Perpetual giggling, careless grammar and freckles were noticed at first, but were speedily forgotten because she was so lovable. There was absolutely nothing that could disturb her careless gaiety. A giggle and "I don't care" were the buoys that held her above any sea of youthful trouble.

One day she surprised them all.

"Anna, if I give you a ticket to the May Ball at National Rifles' Hall, will you go to see me dance? My dress'll be fine, and there'll be lots of 'em dressed that way. I guess the Queen will be just lovely. You'll like to see 'em all. I ain't goin' to git many tickets, but I'll give you one of 'em if you'll go. I'd like to git one for you all, but I ain't got favor enough with the teacher."

Anna was a staunch little Methodist, and the knowledge that Cora was connected with dancing-

schools and May Balls shocked her. She would not think of going to anything of the kind. But she realized that, in Cora, the offer was kind and generous and oh! wouldn't it be lovely to see her in fancy dress and whirling around in the pretty figures of the dance? Anna's fingers tapped the desk in time to imaginary music.

"Why, *Cora!* can you dance? How often do you go to dancing-school?"

"Why didn't you tell us before? Who's your teacher,—and do you like it? Think what a somebody you are! None of us go."

"Here, Cora Smith, get right up and give us the skirt-dance. I think that is lovely."

These successive questions gave Cora a chance to giggle, and Anna time to think before answering. Cora kicked a few times, then giggled again, and declared she could not do it without music.

"I'll whistle for you," said Anna. "Will that do? I can whistle better than my brother."

She had never whistled before the girls, and her self-consciousness, as she did so, made her remember that there would be a crowd of people at Cora's May Ball. At this school she often forgot that she was an invalid, but of course it would not do for

her to go into such a crowd. Her breath failed her before Cora was in the least tired.

"I can see you like to dance," said Anna. "I would just love to see you at the May Ball, and it's lovely in you to offer me a ticket. But I never go to entertainments and things like that, because there's always such a crowd."

"But your father could take you and roll your chair right in, and the crowd would make room for *you*. The ball will be on the second floor, but anybody'd help you up. You go to that church not far from there. I seen you when I come out of Sunday-school."

"Oh, do you go to my church? I didn't know it."

"I go there to Sunday-school when I git up in time."

"You see, I know all those church people and they know me."

"But you didn't when you first went. Why can't you have a first time at a ball?"

Now here was a fine chance for a virtuous declaration of Methodist principle and rule. Anna hoped it was not disloyal or wrong to ignore it.

"That is different, Cora. All the excitement

and strange things would be rather hard on me—really too much for me. But I'm ever so much obliged." If there had been any other way to refuse without hurting Cora's feelings, Anna would not have used her weakness as an excuse, because she strongly objected to reminding people of it.

For a week after Cora came, Daisy was angelically good. She answered Bessie's whispers with stern looks of disapproval, Cora's giggling with a blank stare, and Nettie's occasional disrespectful words, to Miss Ivah, with scorn and indignation. She rewarded Anna's perfect obedience with the sentence, "*I want to be an angel like you!*" scratched on the slate under the examples she had corrected. Miss Ivah enjoyed the order without understanding the cause.

The first school day of a new week was warm and sunshiny. The Sunday happenings had not been half discussed when nine o'clock intruded. The first lesson was arithmetic. There were ten examples on the board; and when Cora had copied them on her slate, she dawdled and giggled in a provoking way.

"Shut up! can't you? and give a body a chance

to work these horrid old things !” Daisy suddenly exclaimed with sharp temper.

Miss Ivah’s reproof made her sullen, and she scowled as Bessie said audibly,

“She won’t die just yet.”

Just then a spitball, thrown by an erring hand, landed on the table by Miss Ivah. There was silence. Miss Ivah rose.

“Who threw that?”

“I did,” said Mattie, looking a little frightened, yet laughing.

“Why Mattie! What do you mean?”

“I didn’t go to throw it at you, Miss Ivah; I threw it at Bessie because she said that to Daisy when she was feeling bad and—cross. I don’t like things said about me when I’m cross. That makes me *mad*, Miss Ivah.”

Daisy stared at her defender.

“But don’t you know that was wrong?” said Miss Ivah.

Mattie shifted from one foot to the other. “Well,” she said, in her deliberate way, “Daisy threw one at Cora, so I thought I would do it too.”

“A backer, a copier and a tell-tale all in one,”

murmured Daisy. "But she didn't know she was letting the cat out.—Standing up for me that way!"

"Cora, is that so?" demanded Miss Ivah.

"Yes'm," giggled Cora. "But I didn't mind. It come right smack on my cheek," and she giggled and giggled.

"Well, I mind," sharply. "I cannot allow such flagrant misbehavior. Spitballs are abominable. I must ask Daisy and Mattie to stay half an hour after school. And, Bessie,—please remember that audible remarks are not allowed. The next offence must be punished."

"Yes'm," said Bessie, though she knew an answer was not expected.

Nettie and Bessie came in late after the half-past ten recess. Nettie sullenly listened to the reproof that followed, and Bessie said, with careless unconcern,

"We ran down to that little park on Rhode Island Avenue to get a breath of air, and we hadn't any watch, so how could we tell what time it was?"

"In the future you must satisfy yourselves with the air of this square."

Nettie could not understand one part of the grammar lesson for that day. Miss Ivah patiently

explained, and each girl was proud to illustrate. Nettie listened and watched, and declared she understood ; yet she repeatedly failed to answer correctly when it was her turn to illustrate. Cora giggled, Daisy made eyes, and Nettie was plainly more attentive to them than to the lesson.

“We cannot spend more time on you, Nettie. You are not trying,” said Miss Ivah severely. “You may take your seat.”

Nettie flung herself on the chair, dropped her arms on the desk, and hid her face. Miss Ivah’s tone had never been so awful, and *she* had done nothing ! When you are not made with more brains you cannot do everything. She had not done anything half so bad as those girls had done, lots of times !

Every girl deserted the grammar lesson and stared at Nettie’s shaking figure.

“Nettie has lost control of herself. Can you help her any by neglecting *your* work?” sharply asked Miss Ivah.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MASCULINE GENDER.

“OH, dear!” said Daisy aloud, one day the next week.

Four sighs from less daring or more obedient scholars followed the exclamation.

Miss Ivah took out her watch and looked at it. “Your time is much faster than mine. There are yet forty minutes before the noon recess. We will suspend talking until then.”

“Well,” rebelliously began Daisy, but then she could not help laughing.

“I’ll never get these genders in my head!” burst from Nettie. “Horrid old things! What’s the sense in them? I know a boy when I see him, and I know enough to talk about him right. If I want to write any love-letters I’ll get my sister to do ’em for me.”

“Good for you! I didn’t know you were so smart,” said Daisy. “But *I* know something about people that are not boys!”

Miss Ivah despairingly put down her book. She did not want to be stern and severe with the dear children. She liked a gentle rule with occasional indulgences ; but if that failed to keep order, she must make herself more rigid. "I hope we shall not have a repetition of last week's insubordination."

"I hope not," sympathetically responded Daisy, "but, Miss Ivah, that's a mighty hard word. I do believe if you'd stop this horrid lesson for a minute and let us sing we'd sing the badness out of us."

"Oh, will you, Miss Ivah?" asked Bessie eagerly.

Cora giggled. "Singin' 'll git the giggle out of us, Miss Ivah," and she giggled again.

"Well, if you think it will help you any we will sing. What shall it be?"

"'The Little Fish,' " said all together.

The musical talent of the school was not at all above the average. Anna had rather a good voice and could manage it fairly well, but it was necessarily weak. Daisy was considered the best singer. It was literally impossible for Bessie to turn a tune. Her voice was not bad, but when she tried to turn from one note to the other her voice persisted in sounding the same few notes. The girls considered her valuable as a sort of accompaniment. Nettie

could easily sound all the notes but never succeeded in singing the right ones at the right time. With much energy and enjoyment they sang their favorite song, beginning :

“ ‘ Dear mother,’ said a little fish,
‘ May I go out to play ?
I’m very hungry, and I wish
I’d find a worm to-day.’ ”

Before they had tempted the little fish, and brought him to his death by a fish-hook and line, there was a knock at the door.

“ It may be the President of those old States we’re studying about. I don’t believe *he* knows when they each came into the Union and what was the population then, to-day, and to-morrow,” whispered Daisy, and then she stared while Cora giggled and giggled.

When Miss Ivah returned she was followed by a little old lady, with white hair, and a little boy with head shyly hung and mischief in the corner of his eye.

“ We are to have some visitors this morning. We will begin the song over again, so Master Jim can hear it.”

Cora nodded and smiled at the visitors, and in-

stantly five pair of eyes demanded an explanation. She hastily scrawled something on her slate and held it up so all could read :

" They live next door to me."

As she was rubbing off the sentence, Miss Ivah turned around and said, in surprise, "Cora, didn't you understand? We are to sing now. You can clean your slate later."

"All right'm," said Cora, with wonderful composure, but the girls could hardly sing because of their suppressed mirth.

"There, Jimmy dear, don't you think that's a pretty song?" asked the old lady.

"Nope," responded Jimmy dear.

"Oh, yes it is. That is a beautiful little song. I think it's nice in the little girls to know it without the book. Miss Gannet, what book is it in? I'm fixing up a box for the little heathen, and I think they'd be so pleased with the piece. Such a nice moral, you know. Will you write me the name of the book? I'll hunt in every store in the city for it. I'd like to send a dozen copies to the little heathen children. Poor things! They haven't any pretty little dresses and aprons and nice teachers and books and a school, as these

nice little girls have. Aren't you sorry for them, Jimmy dear?"

"Nope."

"Oh, now, Jimmy dear, nice little boys are sorry. Wouldn't you like to come here every day and study and sing that pretty little song?"

Jimmy dear silently twirled his cap.

"Wouldn't you, Jimmy dear? These nice little girls will study with you and you can sing all the time. At home, you know, you have only poor old grandma, and she isn't worth much."

"Don't like to study. I'd get tired of singing."

"There'll be nice little studies here, and you needn't sing if you don't want to. You can come and try. I know you'll like it. Don't you think you would, Jimmy dear?"

"Don't know," he jerked out as he shyly returned Anna's smile. That reminded Mrs. Strand of something.

"I hope you little girls will be real good to my little boy. He is shy, and if you kind o' coax him, like I do, maybe some day I'll bring you a box of candy." She smiled and nodded, and then half-opened the door. "Well, Jimmy dear, will you stay here now or come to-morrow?"

"'Morrow," he gasped, and clung to her skirts.

"Well, you needn't be frightened,"—laughingly.
"These little girls won't hurt you."

As the door closed after the visitors the scholars looked at one another. They were amazed and indignant at this open attempt to bribe them before the child.

"I wonder if she thought we would beat him?" growled Anna. She hardly knew what made her feel so downcast. She must have had a dim perception of the promise in the child and the incapability of the grandmother to train him with loving wisdom.

"*We* aren't heathen—" began Bessie, but that caused a long season of laughter and giggling. They had faithfully restrained themselves during the declaration of Mrs. Strand's intentions, but it was impossible to suppress all comment.

"Did you *ever* hear anything so—"

"She's a *grown up*—"

"Think of the missionaries teaching that song, instead of 'Jesus loves me.' And Miss Ivah never—"

"Wouldn't you like to be there when they open the box—"

Each girl began a sentence, but was unable to

finish it. The matter was too astonishing and ridiculous to be completely discussed.

"We would be good to him, anyway. I think he's cute," said Bessie.

"I believe he's a perfect imp and will be lots of fun," said Daisy.

"He's only four, and he ain't her grandson or no relation. She just adopted him. I don't know where she got him," said Cora.

"Do the two live alone?" asked Anna.

"No, there's Mrs. Strand's married daughter and her husband, and they're crazier than Mrs. Strand. Jimmy's pretty bad, but he ain't got nothin' to make him good. None of 'em know how to manage him. They let him do what he oughtn't, and fuss at him like mad when he's doin' what won't hurt nothin'. Sometimes they beat him. I kin hear him yellin'."

The girls had never seen Cora so much aroused. They admired the indignation and the new animation it gave her face. They did not care to comment on her statement.

At half-past nine the next morning, Jimmy slowly walked up the brick path. Miss Ivah waited for him to ring the bell, but Nettie reported that he

just stood there kicking his heels against a post of the porch, and so she offered to let him in.

“Why are you late, Jimmy?” asked Miss Ivah.

“Didn’t want to come. She made me.”

He backed against the door and softly continued the kicking.

“I will consider you a visitor and excuse you this time. But after this you must come at nine o’clock. Where would you like to put your little chair?”

Jimmy glanced up, dropped his eyes and said nothing.

“You can have it anywhere.”

“By her.”

He jerked the words out and pointed to Anna.

Anna was delighted, and turned the contents of her desk topsy-turvy for his benefit while the others recited. She was now a class of one in all studies but arithmetic. Three months of regular work had enabled her to master each day’s lessons without so trying an effort as at first. So she had asked for longer tasks, and was consequently ahead of the others. She was never put back by an ill-prepared lesson, as were the rest. When her lazy times came, she learned her history and geography as a

parrot learns, without taxing anything but her good memory. But she always scorned herself after she had studied in that superficial and temporary way, and so her lazy times were few.

Little Jim's people sent him to school because it was a safe place and they would be rid of the care of him for many hours of each day, and not because they wished him to study ; and Miss Ivah had been requested to make school a pleasant play of which he would not tire. To the older scholars, his lessons, paper-weaving and other occupations were real play, and they stopped dawdling over their own tasks that they might share in his. He smiled slyly at them all and graciously accepted their assistance, but to Anna only did he talk. In return for that favor, she willingly cut paper houses, boats, soldiers' caps, handkerchiefs, and all sorts of men and women. Each day, when the word of release was spoken, he flung them all in the waste-basket and the next morning demanded more.

They were very good friends, but Anna did not dare to be left alone with him in the room. He had an idea that if he tipped up the back of her wheel-chair, it would make her get up and walk, as he had to do when his playmates tried to tumble

him. Several times he had attempted to experiment, and Anna had explained that there was no possibility of her being able to oblige him.

"You just won't," he had stubbornly answered. "Let me whip you. That'll make you run."

He had a hard struggle with the alphabet, and the girls often admired Miss Ivah's patience and gentleness with him.

"Miss Ivah, are you having such a hard time with *your* alphabet?" suddenly asked Bessie one day.

Miss Ivah wondered what form of mischief lay back of the question.

"You see, we children are the letters. Anna, Bessie, Cora and Daisy are the first four letters, and Mattie, Nettie and Jim are the odd ones. You're studying us so you'll know how to make us learn, aren't you?"

"Why, yes I am ; and I hope I won't shirk my study."

"Oh, never mind the moral," grunted Daisy.

The next morning Daisy and Bessie put a letter on Miss Ivah's table, giggling so much as they did so, that the others begged to know the contents. They were virtuously scornful of the ill-mannered

curiosity. While Miss Ivah read it, all watched expectantly.

“You naughty children,” she said laughingly. “How much time did you spend on your lessons last night?”

“Read it out 'loud. They're so curious they'll die if they don't know,” said Daisy.

So Miss Ivah read :

TO THE SCHOOL-MISTRESS.

Thinking that Miss Ivah Gannet would be glad of help in her study of the Alphabet, two able and well-known writers of this city, Miss Daisy Joy and Miss Bessie May, submit their explanation of a part of

THE ALPHABET.

A—an *awfully ambitious* scholar (much ability).

B—a *bright, beautiful* scholar (much backbone).

C—a *calm, companionable* scholar (poor complexion).

D—a *darned debonair* scholar (very daring).

J—a *jumping-jack* scholar (real jolly).

M—a *merry, mischievous* scholar (very meritorious).

N—a *nice negligent* scholar (rather naughty).

N. B.—With apologies for the swear word. The dictionary would not give another good one.

CHAPTER VII.

ADDITION AND SUBTRACTION.

“GUESS what !” said Anna.

Her tone roused curiosity in the four girls who were slipping off their coats and hats.

“We are to have a new teacher.”

“Instead of Miss Ivah ?” cried Daisy. “You don’t mean it. Oh, dear !”

“I didn’t say we were to *lose* a teacher. We’re to have another added on. Miss Ivah’s sister.”

“Oh, I’m scared of *her*. What’s the matter with Miss Ivah ?” groaned Bessie. “I shall tell her she *must* teach us to-day or let us go home. Wouldn’t that be great ?”

“She has gone. You won’t see her till to-morrow,” said Anna. “Oh, she did look too pretty ! Have any of you seen her Sunday coat and hat ? Well, the coat is light brown, and so smooth and shiny ; and the hat is brown, too, with blue in it ; and she had fur around her neck, and her cheeks were pinker than you’ve ever seen them, and she

just looked fine ! I wish people could wear their best clothes all the time."

"You ought to see *my* best clothes. I'm as pretty as Bessie, on Sunday," said Daisy.

"Why don't you wear them here one day and let me see?"

"I can't. I asked mama and she said no. I'll try her again, though. Maybe she'll forget she didn't want me to."

"You'll have to behave to-day. Miss Ivah's sister ain't goin' to let you cut up none," said Cora. "She was a public-school teacher before she got married. I reckon she's spanked a boy many a time."

"The idea !" said Anna. "That kind of punishment isn't allowed, and I don't believe Miss Vesta would do it, anyhow. You know we said she was pleasant-looking. I don't believe she'd have to take a whip to make anybody mind."

"Are you going to call her Miss Vesta?" asked Nettie. "She's married, you know."

"But I don't know her married name, and I shan't ask her, so I'll have to say Miss Vesta. It just suits her, because it sounds so big and—dignified—and like—like somebody that says what you're to do—oh, I don't know."

"You're thinking about Queen Esther," said Daisy. "But we'll say Miss Vesta, of course, because a teacher hasn't any business to be married. We'll just forget her old husband."

"He isn't an old husband at all!" said Anna with dignity. She was vexed with herself because she could not express her thought, and cross because they did not have the thought themselves and stupidly belittled her knowledge. If anybody knew the Bible, she ought to know it, after the way her mother had taught it to her and the way she had told Bible stories to Clifford. She hoped she knew when she was thinking of Queen Esther and when she was not!

"Oh, he isn't!" said Daisy teasingly. "He's some sort of a husband, though, isn't he?"

Anna was tempted to be contemptuous, but conquered her crossness and laughed. "Often in the morning, as I come in, he is going out and he speaks so nicely. I do like dark-haired men, and I just know this one is nicer than his looks."

"He looks more like a German than the Gannets do," said Cora. "I seen him once or twice."

"Well, I hope his wife won't take a fancy to sit

down on me," sighed Daisy. "I don't feel very quiet to-day."

Cora giggled. "She'd squash you to nothing if she did. Oh, my! She's lots bigger and fatter than Miss Ivah. Oh, here she comes. Hush! Git in your seats and don't move a finger."

"Good-morning, girls. Miss Ivah had to be away to-day, so I am to be her substitute. I think we can work together honestly, so she will not be disappointed."

As the new teacher greeted the scholars they examined her thoroughly. She was taller than Miss Ivah and largely built. Her walk and every movement were firm. She had black hair that waved about her head, and brown eyes that never overlooked anything. Her smile was as pleasant as Miss Ivah's, but not so generous or excusing. The girls felt that it was strictly for the well-behaved and industrious.

"Instead of reading a chapter, I would like each one of you to say a verse. Miss Daisy?"

"Ma'am?" said Daisy, startled.

Cora giggled in one breath, and then breathed rapidly to avoid a repetition of the offence. She had been to public school and knew that the

one thus addressed must immediately stand and recite.

"I wish you to begin." Miss Vesta allowed her voice to express surprise at the misunderstanding.

"Miss Cora, did you speak?"

"No'm."

"Then we will have the first verse."

"'Let your women keep silence in the churches,'" blurted Daisy. "I couldn't think of any other. That made me mad when I read it and I've never forgotten it."

"This is not the place for confession of your sins. The rest will please give a verse without comment."

That tone was a checkmate for Daisy, and before school was dismissed each girl had received the same at different times. Bessie had hers because of the lesson she was always the most sure about.

"Miss Ivah planned an examination in arithmetic for the first lesson. You see she has put the test examples on the board." Miss Vesta lifted the blackboard and turned the other side out. "There are not many. We will have perfect quiet while you work them."

There was one example more than Miss Ivah had

ever given them at a time, and Bessie thought it was very hard. She took her slate-pencil from her desk and, reaching over for Anna's pencil-sharpener, half-rose from her seat. Then she colored and raised her hand.

"May I sharpen my pencil over the waste-basket?" she asked meekly. At any other time she would have gone to the basket without a thought of getting permission.

"Have you not another pencil that is sharp? Then do it quickly. You must not annoy the others."

Bessie impatiently eyed the examples as she rubbed the pencil from one end of the indented iron to the other, making the white dust fall to the floor.

"You are not attending to your work, Miss Bessie," said Miss Vesta.

Bessie hastily moved her hands and then looked up with an engaging smile. "Miss Vesta, are those examples nearly all alike, or are they like—a flower from every plant in the garden?"

"A lazy motive prompted you, Miss Bessie. If I should tell you that, I might as well do all of the work for you."

The voice was low and even, and only tinged with surprise, but it hinted that much was reserved.

Bessie made peace by instant surrender and steady attention to the examples. But after half an hour Daisy chose to rebel.

"I *wish* you would tell. It wouldn't hurt you, and these are nasty old things! It's like stringing beads. If you'd tell me what color you want me to take I could make more in an hour." She said it in the daring, mock-complaining way that had always made Miss Ivah smile.

Miss Vesta merely gazed at her.

Just then an organ-grinder stopped directly in front of the school and began to play "Get on the Mobile Buck." Cora caught her foot on the chair-leg as she sprang to the window, but she only giggled and exclaimed,

"Oh, I reckon he's got a monkey. Yes, there he is! Ain't he cute? Come look at him, girls. Any of you got a penny?"

Anna wondered if she would have been thoughtless enough to join the group at the window if she could have done so. She dared not look up, but she felt Miss Vesta's steady gaze at the six culprits! In the middle of "Annie Rooney," the stillness of the room and the passing of time came to the consciousness of Nettie. She hastily glanced around

and then grabbed the girls next to her; music lost its charm, and they meekly seated themselves and waited.

“It seems that you think me incapable of teaching a school,” began Miss Vesta. “As I understand it, a teacher must do more than make a scholar learn so many pages of a book each day. She must do more than explain anything that is difficult to understand. A teacher must teach a child how to help itself—how to control and use wisely its power to study, to play, or to help others, so it will grow into what it should be. I taught many years in a public school, and I intend to teach one day in a private school. You will find it much easier if you regard me as a friend rather than an enemy. Shall we see if we can, without punishment, use this incident for the betterment of your behavior?”

Six subdued girls nodded. Jim kept on staring. He had not spoken a word since he came and found that Miss Ivah was not to be there.

The clock struck twelve. Miss Vesta did not stop correcting the examples on Mattie's slate. Six subdued girls waited. Miss Vesta gave the slate back to Mattie, then stepped to the blackboard and began to write a sentence. All could tell that it was

to be used in the grammar lesson after recess. One, two, three, four sentences were written. Six subdued scholars sighed. Bessie tried to see Anna's watch, and Anna turned it so she could see that the minute hand pointed to seven minutes past twelve.

Miss Vesta put down the chalk and smilingly turned to the girls. "School is dismissed. I shall not ring the bell until twenty minutes to one," she said, and then left the room.

"Bless me and my soul!" said Daisy. Of course it was she who began.

"Three minutes extra recess for bad behavior," chuckled Nettie. "My! but I felt funny when I turned around. Anna, why didn't you say something to us?"

"I didn't *dare*."

"Of course not.—You hush up!" Daisy used her hand as a lock for Nettie's mouth. "Those three minutes show that Miss Vesta ain't nasty. Anna, don't you like her?"

"Ever so much. It's nice to have somebody to make you mind, isn't it?"

"Yes, I like somebody you're scared of. My goodness! You wouldn't want to fool much with Miss Vesta."

"Would you rather have Miss Vesta than Miss Ivah? I wouldn't," said Cora.

The girls hesitated and frowned over the puzzling matter, and could not make a choice.

"Well," began Daisy. "Well, I—it's nice to have your teacher laugh and understand things while she's teaching, and then it's nice to have your teacher drive you along and make you think you couldn't stop if you wanted to. Oh, well! Miss Ivah's a dear and gets you to learn, and Miss Vesta makes you learn and is awfully nice. I'd like to have 'em both every day."

"I don't know." Bessie shook her head doubtfully. "Those examples were all addition and subtraction in fractions, after all our trying other ways; she might have told us. I'd have felt dreadful if I'd missed; wouldn't you?"

Anna was still waiting for Janet and talking to Miss Vesta when Miss Ivah came back.

"Your girls are nice children, and I enjoyed teaching them," said Miss Vesta. "They were all perfect in the arithmetic examination. I think I've added a few grains to their respect for a teacher and subtracted some of their lawlessness."

CHAPTER VIII.

LETTERS A AND D SQUABBLE.

THE days and weeks of school life went on in charming peace and order after the substitute's teaching of the lesson in addition and subtraction.

The scholars had stopped to think, and were true-hearted and sensible enough to see that whining and rebelling were not honorable parts of the day's routine. They had not before realized that although their behavior might be funny to them, it could not be considered pretty by either scholars or teacher. It was an unflattering glimpse of themselves which made them begin to get all the fun they could out of keeping rules with strict honesty. In that Miss Ivah could be entirely with them and have her share of the fun. Frisking, joking and teasing were still most evidently alive, but each girl was a faithful police who sternly kept it within bounds.

“It's funny how you can go on being mean for

so long and not know it," said Daisy. "I say fair play even at school."

"Yes, but Miss Ivah's getting to be 'most as strict as Miss Vesta," sighed Bessie. "I just believe she was studying her old Alphabet all that time, and now she knows in her mind just how to make her letters." Bessie always offered a charming little laugh as an excuse for her absurd speeches.

"Well, she's got to make me a nice one or I'll make myself," asserted Daisy. "I don't want to be spoiled and rubbed out."

"Then do let Miss Ivah have the job, because you make fearful *D's*," said Nettie. "I never saw such scratches. You make the little ring at the bottom so big you don't leave any room to make a big fat one at the top."

The critic is ever in a dangerous position. Nettie was leaning over her long cloth bag, from which she was unloading numerous books. After her impartial and calm judgment she was sent to the floor by a firm hand, and her books dropped down upon her.

"They'll do for the spattering of ink you didn't mention," said Daisy with mock fierceness. "I'm the little ring, and I don't leave any room for the

big fat one. You *do* weigh a hundred and fifty, don't you? Get up and we'll settle this. If you can push me out in the hall I make my *D's* another way, but if I push you out, then my *D's* are just the right way to make 'em."

Bessie and Anna exchanged glances of delight at this declaration of a contest, but Anna added a sigh for a surety against something broken. However, a struggle was so gloriously exciting that damages and consequences were not thought of again.

An inch to one side, a couple to the other, and a sudden lurch back was the record of the first minute. The puffing, panting and stops for giggling were the unceasing accompaniments. Severe knocks on the elbows and skinning of shins were borne without a grumble or a groan. It was not an equal contest, because Nettie was stronger and more heavily built. Up to the door she forced her antagonist, but then she had a harder struggle to get it open. That was the most exciting and fluctuating part. Daisy put all her strength and will in the effort to keep that door closed. It was pulled open an inch and then shut with a bang; jerked open six inches and slowly forced back;

and at last flung wide open, and against Miss Ivah's chair, with a crash. Nettie half turned to grip Daisy more securely, and then her forehead bumped against Cora's!

There was a cry of triumph, two groans, the suspended breath of two people, and a shower of candy that dropped from a box and rolled over the floor. Three pair of eyes were fixed on the hands wildly nursing the injured foreheads. No one dared speak till Cora dropped her hand and giggled.

"Oh, it's just like—oh, my!—it's just like two chocolate drops stuck on your face!" gasped Bessie, as she pointed to the small round lumps that had quickly raised. "I never saw brown bruises!"

Nettie was not accustomed to giggling over everything, so she preferred not to discuss her wound. "Where did all that candy come from?" she asked.

"I was rushin' in to show you, when you bust open that door and clean knocked the sense out of me," said Cora. "Oh, Miss Ivah, look! Did you think your house was comin' down?"

"I could not imagine—why, *girls*! Come up stairs and let me attend to those bruises."

Miss Ivah stood in the doorway to avoid stepping on the candy. When she returned it had been picked up and divided into six piles, one on each desk.

"We guessed it was that prize for being good," said Bessie. "Was it?"

"That's what it is. Mrs. Strand called me this mornin' and told me to give it to you all for bein' so sweet to Jim. He ain't comin' any more. He likes it, and would rather be here than home with 'poor grandma,' but he'd rather play in the street than do anything, and she's tired of makin' him stop. It's a one-pound box." Cora did not try to hide her scorn for the gift and the giver.

"We didn't want her to send any, but by the way she talked I thought she would give—half a pound for each of us, *anyway*," said Bessie.

"It's not the best candy, either," added Anna. "I do wish they wouldn't put pink cream inside of chocolate drops."

"Don't be so finical. But I'll take your share if you don't want it," said Daisy, grabbing.

"I do want it. I earned it, let me tell you. I didn't want pay, but I'll eat it. Ugh!" Anticipating a delicious taste she had bitten into a chocolate

drop. "Why will they put that nasty peppermint in them?"

The girls were sorry to lose their little pet; he had been a subject of mutual care. When, afterwards, they first met him on the street he immediately edged away from them as if they had power to make him leave his beloved street and enter the school-room. But when he found that they only smiled and nodded at him, he always began to return the compliment when they were still far off.

Anna and Daisy were the best spellers in the school. Each afternoon Miss Ivah put on the blackboard a list of words which the girls had to copy and take home to study. It was soon a regular thing for Anna to make three copies, two of which were given to the girls in turn, so they would be relieved of the labor. Sometimes she made a copy for every one of them, but that was considered too handsome a gift for everyday presentation. It was often very inconvenient and tiresome to be accurate so many times, and she had to make use of every minute to do it. But how pleased and proud she was to be allowed to do something for those dear, funny girls! When they politely protested, she declared that she almost knew her spell-

ing-lesson when she had finished writing, so it saved her the trouble of studying it.

Miss Ivah always called out the words while the scholars wrote them down, and then called them again while each corrected another's paper. Daisy and Anna always expressed gladness when they could return perfect papers, and sympathized whenever they were compelled to check off a word, and yet each was joyful when she could get ahead of the other. The rivalry was sharp and steady, but perfectly honest and kindly.

One Monday morning Daisy's manner was noticeably self-important, and immediately jarred on Anna.

"Oh, Anna, you should have seen Daisy's brothers yesterday!" exclaimed Bessie. "They've been taken into the vested choir, and they do look too sweet in their white robes! You'd have thought they were angels walking up the aisle, they looked so good, and as if they'd never slapped Daisy in their lives."

"They aren't angels, but they did look lovely," said Daisy, proudly. "Mama had an awful time getting the robes ready. She didn't know they were to be in it till late, and she had a time getting them washed."

Nettie burst into loud laughter at this confusion of pronouns. "I'd be ashamed to tell it of my brothers, Daisy Joy!"

Any mention of these brothers made Anna decidedly cross and envious because they did not belong to her. She thought that if she could not go about like others, she might have had some older brothers to be proud of.

"Then you are Episcopal," she said in a horrified tone, which was not really half as horrified as she was. "Why, they are next to the Catholics!"

"They ain't anything of the kind!" snapped Daisy. "Catholics are nasty, and we ain't!"

Anna had never known an Episcopalian, and so all the people of that church were joined to and mixed with the Catholics in her mind. Clifford would never let her read a book to him which had in it anything about the Catholics. Although she laughed and wondered at his prejudice, she vaguely abhorred what she thought was merely a show instead of the genuine faith.

Daisy resentfully turned to Bessie and began a conversation about a former girl neighbor.

"She used to be real nice and pretty, but now she's as stuck up and ugly as sin. There ain't

anything for her to be stuck up over, but she brags and brags and brags all the time. She can have this if she wants to, and go there if she wants to, but she never has any of it, and doesn't go at all! Her house isn't as big as ours!"

"Must be a nice girl. Who is she?" asked Nettie, and Anna silently thanked her for asking the question which she did not care to ask herself.

"Myra Barker. She used to be real fun,—didn't she, Bessie?"

"What makes her boast, if she hasn't anything?" asked Nettie, and again Anna thanked her.

"Well, her father is M. M. Barker, the Commissioner, but that's nothing! I'm as good as she is, if he is a Commissioner, and she needn't be so uppish."

Now it was that Anna found a flaw in one of her idols. She had laughed at, but liked, the conservatism which made Daisy despise public schools and slow to be friendly with any but those of her own world. But here she was cheapening an office of the government, and had not a word of praise for the man who could be chosen to fill it, or a particle of esteem for his daughter.

"I think it's a great deal!" Anna cried. "It's a fine thing to be chosen Commissioner, and I'd be awfully proud if my father was one, and I know you would, too! It's just because he isn't, that you talk that way. I think it's mean and low to be jealous of a girl just because she is higher up in the world than you are!"

The girls stared, and then quickly Daisy made peace. She could not comprehend the thoughts and feelings that had caused Anna's scorn, and so it was only comical to her. In one minute she had stepped on her chair and then on the desk.

"She ain't any higher up in the world than *me*!" she cried, waving her arms.

Anna came down from her superior height and laughed convulsively. She was glad to be friends again, and was tickled at Daisy's quickness. Of course she must not expect any one to know more than they can at their age.

"Do you like Daisy or Bessie the best?" asked Janet, as she wheeled Anna down the path that afternoon. "I met them playing at the corner."

Anna thought a minute and found she did not know. Daisy usually said "ain't" and Bessie always said "isn't." Anna preferred to use the

latter, but she liked Daisy's "ain't" as well as Bessie's "isn't." Janet's question harassed her because she had no answer for it.

"I *wish* I could decide which I like best," she muttered to herself. "Daisy or Bessie, Bessie or Daisy. It's Bessie ; no, *Daisy* ; I mean Daisy ; no, *Bessie*. What a muddle. Oh, dear ! What is my mind for, anyway ?"

CHAPTER IX.

GHOSTS.

A N offensive odor penetrated the closed door of the dining-room where Miss Ivah, Miss Vesta and their parents were enjoying their noon meal. They stopped eating and looked at each other.

“What is that?” demanded Miss Vesta. “It is not anything cooking in this house, and the windows are not up. Those children!”

“Something is scorching. I must go to see what it is,” answered Miss Ivah with dignity. “So long as the mischief is thoughtless I do not complain. They are dear children.”

She hurried through the hall and opened the school-room door. Almost total darkness met her intent gaze, and the odor came then with obnoxious distinctness.

“What are you doing, and what is that I smell?”

A minute of silence, and then a chorus of groans.

"Dead men's bones!" came in a scarey whisper. "Trespass not on these domains. Beware!"

This was at once puzzling and ridiculous. "Are you all there? Tell me what this means," said Miss Ivah imperatively.

"Beware! We are ghosts! Depart!" Moans and groans backed this command.

Miss Ivah felt her way to the bay-window, opened a blind and flung up the shade. Then she turned to confront five ghosts with white enshrouded heads, who dumbly circled around her and wildly waved ten arms. From a corner which was still dark came disconnected moaning, a tiny flame of fire, and that fearful smell. Miss Ivah elbowed her way through the solemn ghosts to the corner.

"Anna, what are you doing?"

Anna stopped moaning, and laughed; but she tightly held the toy candlestick and went on burning a lock of hair in the flickering flame.

"It's nasty, isn't it? But this is the last one. This is our badge, no—we are initiating—that is, it's a sort of—well, I don't know what to call it. But we have to burn all our hair before we can be ghosts."

"I presume you don't mean what you say," said Miss Ivah, and then the girls knew that she was not angry. "What will your mothers say?"

"Oh, it's just a little piece from each head. No one could tell. We had to cut it in the dark, and Daisy was in a hurry when she did mine, so she got the front instead of the back," said Anna. There was a subdued snicker from one of the motionless ghosts. "It's going to look very funny, I know. But it's good it was my hair that was cut wrong. I don't mind, and my mother won't fret. She'll be glad I'm having such a lot of fun. The girls say I am Great Cæsar's Ghost, so I tell them what to do."

Miss Ivah could not help laughing, though she did not in the least admire the play. "Are ghosts supposed to wear their hair down their backs and those funny caps on their heads? Nettie, will you please open all the blinds?"

That request made the ghosts loud-mouthed and clamorous.

"Oh, Miss Ivah, what made you come and spoil it all!" exclaimed Bessie. "You aren't going to make us stop? It's *recess*, and we won't hurt anything. It's such fun to scare ourselves that way.

We had to let our hair down to get the ends to burn. See, we put our aprons on back side foremost and pulled the skirts over our heads."

"That's all the white we have, but when we huddle to the floor you can't see much but our heads, so it's all right," added Daisy. "Here, let's show her."

Miss Ivah gave herself up to mirth as she viewed the crouching figures, and Cora giggled so sympathetically that she tumbled over.

"We thought of asking our mothers to let us bring nightgowns to put over our dresses, but we're sure they won't," said Daisy. "Have you got any to lend us?"

"I really can't oblige you, and I must ask you not to repeat this performance."

"I won't let them break anything, Miss Ivah," said Nettie. "You don't mind if we darken up every day at recess, do you?"

Miss Ivah wavered. "I'm not sure I approve of make-believe ghosts. It may be harmful to your nerves to frighten yourselves so."

"Why, we're all as strong as can be, except Anna, and she likes it. She's going to tell us ghost stories after we're all burnt. She says she

knows a lot of them that she's read," pleaded Bessie. "And Mattie isn't frightened a bit. She thinks it's fun ; don't you, Mattie?"

"There ain't any ghosts and they can't hurt you," answered Mattie with slow scorn. "I ain't afraid. We're just playing ghost."

"Well, have your fun, then ; but you must burn no more hair."

"Oh, Miss Ivah, she ain't done mine and hers yet," protested Cora. "Just that little bit can't make it smell any worse."

"Very well. Anna, will you promise to consult your watch and have the room as usual by half-past twelve, so that no time will be wasted on the ghosts?"

"I will. While I'm burning the hair I'll sing them something. It is not about a ghost, but it's rather ghostly."

Nettie followed Miss Ivah to the hall, but came back after a moment and darkened the room and joined the group crouched around Anna. The music of the piece was like a dirge, and required quick sighs and terrifying prolonged notes in odd places. With fearful effect Anna sang :

"There was an old woman all skin and bones,
Um—m—m, ah—h—h, um—m.

She thought she'd go to church one day
To hear the parson preach and pray ;
Um—m—m, ah—h—h, um—m.

And when she got to the churchyard stile
She thought she'd stop and rest a while ;
Um—m—m, ah—h—h, um—m."

At the mention of the woman's rest, the strained nerves of the girls found relief in sighs. They huddled a little closer and breathed rapidly.

"And when she got to the churchyard door
She thought she'd rest a little more ;
Um—m—m, ah—h—h, um—m."

This second rest was hard to bear. It only prolonged suspense and made them feel more creepy as they wondered what was coming next.

"She then looked up, she then looked down,
She spied a corpse upon the ground ;
Um—m—m, ah—h—h, um—m."

There was a suppressed shriek and a shuddering movement to find sustaining hands. Anna recognized the voice as Bessie's, and not Mattie's, so she calmly proceeded :

"She then unto the parson said,
'Will I look so when I am dead ?'
Um—m—m, ah—h—h, um—m.

The parson then unto her said,
'Yes, you'll—' "

Anna broke off with a loud scream as she blew out the candle. She had burned the hair slowly, so that the loss of even the tiny light might add to the horrible effect of the sudden scream. There was fully two minutes of awful silence. Then Cora giggled and tickled the form next to her. That familiar giggle recalled them from the ghostly world of horrible things and they scrambled to their feet and exclaimed in every tone.

"I didn't know you could get up such a scream. Miss Ivah'll come flying in here," said Bessie.

"No, she won't. I told her to expect it," said Nettie. "I've heard Anna's mother sing that lots and lots of times."

"Oh! do you remember the night at The Grove when that boy ran all the way across the room and jumped on his father's lap?" laughed Anna. "He was as big as Daisy, too. He said he wanted to ask his father something. The idea!" She glanced at her watch. "We've just two minutes left. Hurry and open the blinds."

"You're to have the worst ghost story you can think of for half-past twelve recess to-morrow," commanded Bessie, as Miss Ivah rang for order.

The next day Anna nervously cleared her throat

before she began her task. "Well, this is a real ghost of my own I shall tell you about," she began. "Mama and I visited some people in Philadelphia once, and they gave us a room on the third floor. Every night after dinner we would go to the sitting-room on the second floor. The grown people talked and talked, so I asked for some books to look at. They didn't have books that were worth anything—only one had pictures in it. I looked at the first ones for ever and ever so long, and wouldn't turn over a page for a long time, so they'd last and I'd have some new ones every night I was there. Well, I wish I'd never seen the old book! The first night I found—"

"Who wants to hear about an old book? I thought you said you knew a ghost story," sniffed Daisy.

"The ghost is coming now. I must tell a story as I know it," said Anna, severely. Clifford never dared interrupt her when she was telling a story. "I found a little square picture of three people with sheets hung over them, and that made the picture all white except the two black specks where the eyes looked through. One of them was kneeling down and the second was standing over it, and the third

horrid thing was pointing behind itself. Ugh ! They made me shivery. I shut that book and tried to listen to what the people were saying. I couldn't ask them what the picture meant, because I knew my voice would shake and then they would find out I was scared. I wondered and wondered, and when mama carried me to the top of the house I trembled so she asked me what was the matter. Those steps were the steepest, narrowest steps you ever saw, and I guess they helped to scare me, because I was afraid mama would fall and hurt herself and me, too. I sat on the bed and my teeth chattered while mama struck a match and hunted for the gas-fixture. There wasn't any gas on that floor ; in a minute somebody brought one little candle. Did you ever undress in a room with only one candle ? Well, only a little bit of the room is light, and the light changes, and you keep thinking that if you have to go in the dark corners somebody may spring out at you. I cuddled up close to mama, but it was a long time before I got to sleep, and then in a little while a noise woke me up. Oh, what *do* you think I saw ?"

Anna made her eyes open wide and stare wildly, and for a moment or two she did not seem to hear the subdued chorus of inquiries.

"*Oh, right there at the foot of the bed were those three things in white!* I wanted to put the cover over my head, but I didn't dare move. Mama had moved over to the other side of the bed, and I couldn't even touch her. I was so frightened I breathed hard, and, of course, that made a noise. *Then those awful things began to beckon me!* I couldn't see all of the one kneeling, but he was doing something with his hands that sounded like cracking bones. Oh! and then the one that was bending over opened his mouth, and I could see 'way back to his throat, and it was the reddest red you ever saw. In a minute blood began to drop out of his mouth on to the one cracking bones, and it wasn't long before that one's head was as red as fire. I *couldn't* lie still. I wiggled and wiggled, and before I knew it I said, '*Oh, don't!*' Oh, what do you think the thing said?"

Not a girl moved or spoke. The red light from the fire in the latrobe fell on Nettie and made her look like the bloody ghost.

"*'Pepper-pot! Smoking hot! Pepper-pot! Five cents a pint, nice pepper-pot!'*" said Anna in a high, shrill tone and with the gravest of faces.

The girls were puzzled and inclined to giggle,

but they waited for more. At last Daisy said, impatiently, "Go on."

"That is all ; only mama turned over to me and said, 'I wish she would not sell it at night ; but pepper-pot is the nicest kind of soup.' "

"What do you mean?" came from Daisy after an ominous silence.

"I suppose you know that an old white woman carries it around in buckets and sells it almost all night in Philadelphia, and that pepper-pot is made of tripe, and a little potato, and water, and herbs that look like little niggers floating around in it."

"I never heard of the stuff, and I don't thank you for telling me," muttered Daisy. "It spoiled that nice ghost story. You're a mean thing to fool us so. You don't mean to say you eat that old soup?"

"Ugh ! I don't, but my people do."

It was amazing to Miss Ivah to note how long that ghost fever lasted. Recess was entirely too short a time in which to complete their plans, so they formed the habit of going home with Anna three days out of the five. The Rodericks' sitting-room could be made densely dark, and there they terrified themselves till the dinner-bell sent them to their homes.

CHAPTER X.

LETTER B'S PARTY.

“**B**ESSIE MAY would like the pleasure of Anna Roderick's company, Tuesday, March 22. From 4 to 8.”

These were the fascinating words written on a sheet of square note-paper which Anna found on her desk one morning. At the top, was a picture of a corner turned down, and so revealing a branch of a tree with six blue, green and red birds perched upon it. The two in the middle smiled at you, the two on the right end chatted together and the two on the left end leaned forward with open beaks to seize the food they seemed to see in the distance. Anna was delighted with the dainty invitation and its form. When she could stop looking at it, she saw that Bessie had put one on each desk.

“You mean old thing, not to let me know a word about it! Now you just begin and tell me everything you're going to have,” said Daisy.

"Well, all of you girls and Grace Larch and Marie Harr and Aunt Elizabeth and—"

"Oh, I know the people you'll invite; I guess I know your friends as well as you do, miss. What are you going to have to eat?"

"I don't know anything about that part. Mama is attending to that. She is going to bake the birthday cake and have it iced at the confectioner's. They can do it so much better and they make such lovely bumps all over it."

"Are you going to have any boys?" asked Nettie. She had many older sisters but no brothers, so the presence of boys at the many parties she had attended made her feel as though she were almost grown up.

"No, what do I want to have them for?" asked Bessie, indifferently. "There will be my brother Norman, but he's only a baby. You couldn't drag Claude into the parlor. He's big for his age, but he won't look at a girl."

"Sometimes he's scared of *me* and mama says I live at Bessie's house. Of course we only want girls at the party. Boys our age think parties are silly and, if they come to 'em, it's for what they'll get to eat. Greedy old things! We don't want them," said Daisy.

“Boys aren’t like that at all!” exclaimed Nettie hotly. “We can have a nice time at Bessie’s party without them, but I know a lot of ’em that behave just as well as girls! Why, Anna, don’t you know what good times the boys and girls had at your house last summer at The Grove? We never had anything to eat. We would just go in your front room and light the lamp and play games, or we’d play ‘Sheep, sheep, run!’ and have the base near your house. Then in the morning we’d play tennis, and you’d count for us. Tennis wasn’t half as much fun without the boys, because you know it’s something to beat a boy. I think boys are nice.”

Daisy and Bessie were still scornful but Anna saw both sides of the matter and tried to explain.

“All those boys and girls went to The Grove every summer, and we saw each other every day. There wasn’t much for boys of that age to do, so they played with the girls in the mornings and evenings. You know, in the afternoons, we girls read and went to sleep, and they tramped around and had lovely times because they didn’t have to try to keep clean. It was just like a big family. One or two of the girls were silly sometimes, but you did have nice times and I enjoyed watching.”

Something outside attracted the girls and when they all ran to the street, Anna added to Miss Ivah,

"But I think they would have had lots nicer times if the girls had made just friends of the boys instead of make-believe beaux. You see they had all been brought up on kissing games, and that took some of the sense out of them. If they wanted to play 'Clap in and clap out' and 'Post-office' and 'Pillow,' they played it without all that silliness at our house. Most of them thought it was lots nicer that way. But they would choose out their special favorites in everything and I should think they would want to leave all that till later. Isn't there a midway point between Daisy and Bessie, and Nettie and those other girls?" Anna was perplexed and she impatiently pushed back her hair.

"There ought to be, and I'm sure there is, but it is hard to make," answered Miss Ivah, gravely. "I think Nettie's way begins when the mothers think it cunning for the babies to choose a favorite and talk, in their childish way, about their beaux and sweethearts. It is unfair, because it really deprives them of true pleasure and friendliness by and by.

Time will change Daisy's and Bessie's way easily and naturally. Perhaps, at first, they will be a little constrained, but it seems to me they will have the better chance to conduct themselves sweetly and sensibly with every one. But we can't help our neighbors to rear their children, can we?"

That afternoon Anna proudly and yet doubtfully showed her invitation to her family. "Isn't it nice in her to ask us all? Of course she would have Daisy, and she knew Nettie before, but she didn't have to have Cora and Mattie and me. I don't know what to do about going."

"Think about it a little while. Papa can take you there, easily, if you feel like it," said Mrs. Roderick. "How is it with Bessie—do you think she really wants you?" The matter-of-fact question revealed the wise way in which the Roderick family treated their invalid. Not from any false sense of delicacy, or under any consideration would they allow her to trouble any one and so distress herself.

"Well, before Bessie went home she asked me if I could go, and said there were seven steps at her house, and that her father could help with the chair. Daisy said to be sure to go if I could. But

I wasn't sure that they were not just trying to be kind and polite."

"Perhaps you can tell better to-morrow. If you don't go you won't have to stand an after headache, and there are other nice things. We will borrow a nice book for that night," said Mrs. Roderick, smiling.

Anna would have resented any more unusual compensation. She despised the weakness of a child who must be bribed to bear deprivation. She did not want pity or sympathy. What she herself could not have she turned away from, or else enjoyed watching some other person have it.

"I ain't going to write to you to tell you I'm coming, Miss Bessie, and the rest needn't be so stuck up as to do it," said Daisy the next day. "You know we wouldn't miss it for anything, so that's all there is to it. Anna, what did your mother say about your going?"

Then Anna proceeded to feel her way. "Mama said that if it was convenient for Mrs. May, I could do as I chose. I think I will go if I am well enough."

Bessie flung her arms around Anna and squeezed her. "Oh, I am so glad," she said. "You haven't

missed a single day from school, so of course you'll be well enough. It won't be a bit hard for you to get there."

"Mama says I can go and wear my new dress," said Mattie. "It's real pretty."

"Bessie, will you wear a white dress?" asked Cora. "I've got a lovely one."

"No, mama says it will be best to wear my Sunday dress. Then no one will feel that they have to bother. We want to have a good time, not bother about clothes."

At a quarter past four, on March 22, Anna waited at the foot of the seven steps while her father rang the bell. She glanced at the closed shutters of the first floor and wondered if any one were peeping out. A little girl, in becoming dress and with short hair curled closely about her head, opened the door, bowed prettily to Mr. Roderick and then ran down the steps.

"We were just thinking you were not coming. Every one is here," she said, and Anna recognized Bessie's voice. "Here is papa to help. I will go ahead."

The greetings and introductions made Anna tremble. Then she was surrounded by a multitude

of aunts and grandmothers, with Bessie's mother, who divided between them the movements required to take off Anna's wraps. The gift was given, the other gifts admired, and then she was safely settled beside a girl with dark hair, sallow complexion, irregular features, and with a something about her that captivated Anna.

"My name is Grace, but Bessie forgot to tell you so. I'm the oldest here, and when I stand up you'll see that I'm awfully tall," she said easily, as if the meeting with invalids at parties was an everyday occurrence.

"I meant to get here before anybody came, but I couldn't. It is just as well, for I suppose Bessie told you all what to expect. This is my first party since I have been on wheels." Anna spoke of herself because she wanted this girl to give her a little attention. It was an unusual impulse, but the girl was so satisfactory.

"I was so curious to see what you looked like," confessed Grace Larch. "What did you go on before?"

"In steel, brass and iron—braces, you know. What pounds I carried about with me!" answered Anna, laughing. "The frame wouldn't do its

work, so I had to give it up. Isn't Bessie's brother a little dear? I do love babies."

"I never know what to say to them, so I let them alone. I like that Mattie; don't you?"

"Yes, indeed I do. She is just as nice as she can be. I think it's so funny that people can't understand that limited people are all the nicer in other ways. If people would stop being sorry they would see more in invalids."

Grace Larch did not understand that speech, so Anna silently reproved herself and turned to listen to the chatter about her. She supposed the party was much like other children's parties, but everything was novel to her. Every minute of the four hours was too short. She enjoyed the games, was interested in the way each took success or failure, and was much amused with her own silent comments. All had on their best gowns; and fine clothes were a very great pleasure to Anna. Then she was so glad to see Bessie's mother; she was interested in all mothers because she valued her own.

"Let's play 'Going to Jerusalem.' Anna, can't you bang something on the piano?" asked Bessie. "Then we can all play. Or will you whistle?"

Anna instantly felt hot all over, but she did want to help. She chose the less embarrassing performance. "I will strike chords whenever I lose the piece—that will do, won't it?"

Cora was left behind at the first stop, and consoled herself by taking a position by the piano where she could whisper directions that would save her favorites. Anna was dismayed. She did not want to offend Cora, but she could not be unfair. Apprehension of Cora's vexation made her nervous, and her striking of the chords was the more noticeable because of the discord. But she courageously refrained from cheating and was relieved to find that Cora only stared and laughed at her disobedience.

The supper-table was attractively arranged, and the refreshments consisted of many tempting dainties, but Anna was too excited for proper appreciation. Suspense was prevalent until Bessie had proudly cut the birthday cake with rigid adherence to all directions. Each guest felt obliged to repay hospitality by telling a joke, and some of them were extremely funny because of the lack of anything that merited a laugh. Mattie's joke received an extra piece of birthday cake as a reward.

"I don't know any jokes," she began. "But there's a man around the corner from me that owed another man some money. The man owed him the money and he wouldn't pay him, and I think that's very funny."

Ice-cream forks fell to the plates with a clatter and there followed a deafening clapping of hands which brought the aunts and grandmothers flocking about the table.

CHAPTER XI.

SPRING DAYS.

“THERE’S an ice-wagon. I’m skinny, but I can git a hunk first. Anna, I’ll git you a piece,” said Cora, as she darted up Q street after the huge blocks that left behind them black lines on the dusty concrete. Miss Ivah disapproved of these raids on the passing wagons; but her pitchers of ice-water were not half so cooling as the stolen lumps that burned every finger before they were small enough to put in the mouth. If a driver were pleasant they praised him, and if abusive they laughed and were glad they had worried him. Spring fever and the sound of teeth cracking ice had marred the perfect quiet of the school-room.

“Did you ever see anything so mean?” exclaimed Bessie. “I couldn’t run any faster. That man saw us coming and didn’t look as if he minded, and when he put out a hand—”

“And put up a foot,” supplemented Nettie.

“Well, if I see him again I’ll ask him how he likes

being so mean. Cora, you must drop that so it will break in pieces."

"There's another wagon for you to catch. I got this and some of it's for Anna, but I ain't goin' to give the rest of you none." Then she dropped it quickly to save herself from an attacking mob that forced generosity.

Daisy distributed the broken pieces, handing the smallest to Cora. "It takes you longest to eat it and you don't want to get Miss Ivah mad. Wasn't it fun that day a stream of water rolled off every desk? It wasn't raining but, at first, I believe Miss Ivah thought the roof was leaking."

Luncheon was again carried to the front porch each day, but The Couple and the bench failed to appear in the next yard. Miss Ivah could state that no furniture had been moved out of the house, but she had not been informed of the movements of The Blonde and The Brunette. But other interests had displaced their hold on the minds of the girls, and they were content with remembrance and a wonder about the identity of the baker.

"Are you going to like botany lessons?" asked Nettie. The question caused the overflow of her share of booty, which fell from her mouth to her

lap and then slid to the ground. She picked it up allowed the heat of her fingers to force a cleansing stream, and returned it to her mouth.

"Never did it. How should I know?" murmured Daisy. She profited by observation and dammed her mouth with the palm of her hand. "Anything's better than German. Nettie's the only one with a tongue made for it, and I'm tired of twisting my tongue out of shape."

"I can't go to Germany, so I don't care about speaking German. I'd like to read it, though. But I haven't read all of the English books yet, so I guess there's plenty of time," said Anna. "Botany's lovely, and I'm so glad we're to have Miss Vesta."

"Why, I'd study—study *politics* if Miss Vesta would teach it," said Bessie. "And there isn't anything nastier than that."

"That was one of the things that got Anna and me in a fuss," said Daisy. "I'm a Democrat forever! Old Republicans ain't any good. That's the only thing I don't like about you, Bessie. You sided with Anna, but Cora sided with me."

"Nettie ought to have settled it, but she kept hanging on the fence," giggled Cora.

“Well, it’s a safe place to be when you don’t know anything about either side,” retorted the accused. “What do *I* know about Democrats or Republicans?”

There was a short silence, full of scorn and wonder.

“Well, it’s funny Anna and I are always fussing about something and never stay mad. Let’s argue some more,” said Daisy persuasively.

Just then the bell rang and Miss Vesta directed attention to the business-like outlines on the board. It was amusing to be taught that there are four parts of a plant ; that the root grows in the ground, gathers food for the plant and also holds it in the earth ; that the stem grows above the root and carries food to different parts of the plant ; that the leaves grow on the stem, form shade, and breathe in carbonic acid gas and breathe out oxygen ; and that the flower grows on the stem and is necessary to produce fruit. They knew all that before, only they had never thought about it. But writing a properly connected statement of the facts was too much to expect of any one—that was a *composition*.

Miss Vesta explained that a flower was to be

studied each day and the facts concerning its structure and other comments upon it were to be written in a note-book in the form of a composition. The scholars groaned under the numerous new terms presented, but they enjoyed the botany lessons and liked to apply their knowledge by speaking casually of a calyx, corolla, stamen, pistil, blade, petiole, or a stipule. They had drawn in their note-books sixteen pattern leaves, and had brought stray counterparts to Miss Vesta to have her see if they had rightly named the shape. Pinnate, palmate, ovate, oblong, obovate, spatulate, heart-shaped, ear-shaped and all the other terms were considered valuable additions to their vocabulary. Finished compositions were also valued and proudly loaned for inspection. Anna was much respected because she could comment upon the plants as well as write the facts about them. The third composition in her book was rated the highest of all.

The Bluet.

One of the earliest and most delicate of the spring flowers which are found in the woods, is the bluet.

Growing from the root, which is fibrous, is a cluster of spoon-shaped leaves from which rises the light green, slightly flattened stem that is very slender.

There are a great many leaves, some at the base of the stem while others are farther up.

The light blue flower having four petals is at the top of the stem.

It seems to me that the bluets love company, for you find them growing close together in little groups, and when the wind softly blows them it seems as if they were nodding to one another.

The last paragraph made it wonderful to the girls and pleasing to Miss Vesta. Anna was surprised, because she had not valued the words when she wrote them. Praise for the thing that came naturally to her made her suddenly feel that she could easily do it again. After that day, she secretly and vaguely had the hope that perhaps she was going to be able to put things together and write about them a little better than most other people.

Each note-book was adorned by the carefully written titles, "The Parts of a Plant," "The Purple Violet," "The Saxifrage," "The Meadow Rue," "The Leaf of the Purple Violet," "The Rose Leaf," "The Violet Leaf and the Lily Leaf," "The Spring Beauty," "The Parts of a Perfect Flower," "The Buttercup," and "The Sorrel." If what followed was badly written and blotted, the beholder reflected that, after composing ten or

fifteen lines "the flesh is weak." Then came the pressing, and the mounting on card-board, of the flowers which Miss Vesta had journeyed to the country to gather. Sticky fingers required frequent trips to the bath-room up stairs, and that necessity relieved the tediousness of the required carefulness and patience. But when Miss Ivah found it necessary to place a cup of water on each desk, life and botany were hard to endure.

"It's all nasty, but there's one part that's nastiest!" exclaimed Daisy. "The old root won't stick, but this is worse." She wrote her name in the corner of the card and pushed it toward Anna. "There!"

"I'd rather slip my knife under slighted places, because I can do that all right, but I make my name look so crooked," said Anna. "*Margaret Joy*. What did you write that for?"

"That's mine. You don't want me to forge a name, do you?"

"But why—"

"Did you ever hear of nicknames? I was such a tiny baby mama thought Margaret was too big a name, and Daisy just suited."

"Margaret is a beautiful name, and I'd call you

that, only Daisy just suits you yet. Miss Ivah, are there really three more flowers to be stuck on? I just *can't* do it." The heat had stolen Anna's strength of will and fortitude. She would not allow her cards to be daubed with mucilage, and the thought of any more painstaking was sickening to her.

"You are tired. Put the work away and finish a little at a time." For the first time, Miss Ivah noticed that Anna's every movement was slow and forced. In cold weather Anna would have scorned to accept a privilege not offered to the others but now she wearily dropped her head on the back of her chair. All through the winter, she had carefully hidden any signs of weakness from the girls but now she did not care what they thought. She was tired of goading her miserable body to do things that were easy for their perfect ones to do.

"I'd like to have the crowfoot violet and the buttercup, but *will* it matter if I don't do the meadow-rue? It isn't pretty pressed, and it is so *hot*—

"“Oh, I wish I was a-sliding down Boffin's Bay,
Where all de niggers am made ob clay.

Hoop-de-loody! Ain't dat gay!
Sliding down a ice-berg on Boffin's Bay?"

She began languidly, and then chanted the song with a reckless impatience that astonished the girls and showed Miss Ivah the state of her nerves.

"Never mind the meadow-rue, then," she said smilingly, and Anna immediately broke the dried flower into fragments.

Miss Vesta made dainty cardboard cases for the mounted flowers and presented one to each of her scholars. Anna chose to have hers pink, with baby blue ribbon, but for a long time afterward she wondered if Daisy's choice of Nile green with pink ribbon were not the prettier.

Penny pickles had charmed the girls all the winter, and even ice could not successfully rival them. One or two of the scholars would part with a penny a day, and generously allow the others bites of the sour equivalent. Generosity now mounted to a heroic height. Home feasts of candy and cake were strictly tabooed to enable the martyrs to furnish the half of a pickle to each school-mate. If consumed judiciously, the half could be made to vanish with the last minute of recess.

"The man's just got in a new barrel. It took me longer because I waited for him to open it,"

announced Cora, who had been chosen errand girl one day. "He had a sharp knife there, so I got him to halve 'em. Here, Anna, you'll have to take three big bites at once to make up time."

Anna obediently filled her mouth and chewed rapidly. She took another big bite, but the first chew made her gasp and wink continually. Every other mouth worked on and every other face was expressive of content, so she half doubted the burning feeling in her mouth. If the girls could stand that strong vinegar, she could, too. Boldly she took the third bite, and then pride wilted. The pickle sourly settled in the corner, while Anna's hands frantically clawed the air.

"Mercy !—Ugh !—My ! My !—*Oh, oh, oh !*" she gasped, while the tears ran down and mingled with the drops of vinegar on her dress.

Five pickles were hurriedly laid in safe places, and five mischievous girls were convulsed with laughter. Back and forth they swayed, with a hand on each aching side ; then, simultaneously, each sought to find rest in one another's arms and the combination went heavily to the floor in a heap.

Pride was again alert. Anna suppressed exclamations and gulped down the third piece. When

her tears ceased, there was grim inquiry in her eyes. From the limp heap on the floor came several attempts at speech. Finally there sounded a weak chorus of—

“Pepper!”

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOTANICAL GARDENS.

“WHY—it’s *Daisy!*” exclaimed Anna, as she looked up from a grammar cram before school.

“Nobody said I was dead, did they?” asked Daisy, crushingly.

“No,—but you look—so—”

“I don’t at all. I haven’t any wings and I slapped my sister Emma fifteen minutes ago.”

“Oh, hush!” Anna laughed. “I mean you look so pretty. That’s a lovely coat and hat. You look just fine in it.”

Daisy thought she must hide her pleasure. “So you thought it couldn’t be me?” she said in an offended tone. “Here’s the same old dress and inky apron. But I thought I’d be fine outside, as Miss Ivah is going to trot her school out. We’ll have to go one by one to make the line long, won’t we?”

As the scholars were thoroughly interested in

the study of botany, Miss Ivah thought a visit to the Botanical Gardens might be profitable to them. Of course the scholars were sure it would. At one o'clock Janet came to wheel Anna slowly along the many squares between, while the others rode in the car. The conservatories were crowded with plants on each side and on a stand down the middle, so there were only narrow paths on which observers and students could walk singly. While Anna and Janet were passing from the quiet of the residence part of the city into the activity of G Street, F Street and Pennsylvania Avenue and on to the staidness of Capitol Hill, the others were following a guide through the bewildering profusion of strange plants and rapid descriptions. As they stepped from the last one of the low buildings they spied Anna's chair entering the gate.

"Oh, Anna, it's grand!" cried Bessie, excitedly. "I never knew such things!—I never knew they had such a big thing to help on with such a little thing as botany—that is, I used to think it was a little thing,—but it isn't at all! It's as big as—why, we don't know a piece of it as big as a pin-head!"

"Well, my head ain't much bigger than that, so

"I don't want any more," said Cora, a little crossly. "I've got a headache now."

"I'll give it a knock or two and that'll puff it out a little," proposed Daisy, scornfully. "Anna, ain't it fine they have all this—why, it's ours as much as anybody's, ain't it?—and bring here from all over the world the slips that people grow there and see if we can use 'em for anything. I didn't know I had so many people working for me for nothing. There was a man in there, and he's been telling us lots of things. I asked him if he was the boss, and he said he was."

One of the workmen was transferring plants from one pot to another with as much care as a mother handles a young infant. His sunburned face was broadened by a grin as he remarked to the smiling teacher,

"Got somethin' from the trip, didn't they? Ideas pretty straight, but 'tain't the reg'lar way of throwin' 'em out. Guess maybe they're smart children."

"Miss Ivah, do you believe it?—the man said —" Nettie paused and groped for expression. "I don't believe that one reason they want to find out about the flowers is so they can put parts in the ground with the crops, and in the



A E RICE

IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS.

mills, and in medicine, to make all that cheaper for the people."

Every one stared. The workman held an empty pot in the air as he waited for the teacher to untangle the knot.

"I heard nothing like that, Nettie. What do you mean?"

Nettie looked helplessly at the hot-houses. "Why, he said he had to be economical, or something."

Miss Ivah and the workman laughed.

"'Economical' he must have said. You will have to believe," said Miss Ivah, smilingly. "What he said was true, but you have mixed it. I'm not sure that I can make it plainer for you."

"She don't want you to," said Daisy, hastily. "Economy's nasty; that's all there is to it. Come on around the garden. It's nice; everything's got its name on a stick stuck in the ground." She stooped to read the inscription on the stick by Anna's chair and then made a face. "Don't catch me putting that in my mouth."

The workman went with them part of the way around the ground and directed their attention to the most important and curious plants. His pride

in every leaf and his shrewd remarks made additional knowledge endurable even to Cora.

"Now who wants to kill a plant?" he asked suddenly. All but Daisy thought silence the safest course. They suspected a joke and did not care to be caught.

"I don't want to kill it, but will if you want me too. I ain't afraid," said Daisy.

The man laughed. "You're a cute one, and you don't want to be caught at this business. Now, if you only knowed it, it's only perticular ones that are let to do it. Now you know there's some chiney cups and things you're afeared to touch for fear they'll break." He paused before a half-shrubby plant with leaves divided into a number of small leaflets. "Now this is one of them delicate things. It don't mind a hard wind or the hot sun, but just let anyone be a little rough with it, and its feelings are hurt so bad it dies right then."

The girls looked at the man, at Miss Ivah, and at the plant.

"Huh!" said Daisy.

"Just knock your hand against it right hard and see," said the man, and Daisy obeyed.

At the unkind touch all the leaflets shrank slowly

together, the short stems sank down, and then the stalk weakened until the plant hung over like a thing without energy or life. The girls held their breath and stood perfectly still. The workman chuckled.

“Didn’t think it would, did you? That’s the Sensitive Plant of the *Mimosa* family. Now what do you s’pose we’re goin’ to do with it?”

Again the girls looked at the man, at Miss Ivah, and at the plant. They were not apprehensive, but they could make nothing out of the matter. When the workman suddenly led the way to the next path, they followed without questioning, for they liked a mystery. But no other plant could rival that queer one; they slighted the rarest specimen and cared not for those of any land. They were still intensely curious when a sudden turn in the walk brought them back in front of the interesting plant.

“Look!” came at once from all. They could hardly believe that the plant had wilted, for once more it stood as erect as any.

The workman chuckled again. “Guess there won’t be nothin’ to pay for damages, will there? Guess you were a leetle bit frightened about that, eh?” He was intensely pleased with his joke and

with the mock anger of the visitors, and went with reluctance back to his work.

"I wish we didn't have to go," sighed Anna, as she again looked around the large green place with the spring sunshine sparkling everywhere. "I wish we had this for a school yard."

"As long as we are here we shall take in all of the places near," announced Janet, and Anna's eyes sparkled. "We shall go through the Mall; it is a long time since you have seen the Fish Commission and the Agricultural Department. Then we shall have just time to meet papa at the Smithsonian. He said he had to be there and would take you home. You know I want to go to see the High School Cadets drill on the White Lot. It is almost time for the competitive drill at the Baseball Park, and Central has to work hard if they want to win. This regimental drill is what they need."

"Bessie and I are going to walk with you and spend our car-fare on the way," said Daisy. "We'll see the others on the car, first."

As the car came in sight Miss Ivah faced her scholars. "You need prepare no lessons to-night, but I want you to write a *composition*—" She stopped to laugh at the quick change in the

faces. "A composition on what you have seen to-day, with facts about the first Botanical Garden and the most noted ones of the present time." She stepped on the car and waved a good-by from the platform.

Daisy and Bessie stood as if petrified until Janet laughed merrily. Then they said slowly, and in revengeful tones,

"She's a mean old maid!"

"That's what she is!"

Anna was indignant that they should speak so of Miss Ivah, but Janet was amused at their idea of hard work and laughed heartily.

"Wait till you are in the High School and you'll have worse than that every day, and real old maids, and grandmothers, as teachers, too," she said.

"Oh, I ain't going to graduate from anything. I ain't going half way up to there," announced Daisy.

"Do let's exchange what we know," begged Bessie. "I don't remember a single thing but that touchy thing."

"Oh, you do!" urged Daisy. "Our Gardens are next best in the world—that one near London is the only one ahead. There are eighteen hot-houses—and—and—"

"Ten acres," added Anna.

"Planted, built, or whatever you call it, in 1867," said Janet.

"Oh, that's enough. The more you know the longer your composition will have to be," said Daisy.

It was a blissful day for Anna ; all the winter she had been longing for The Grove and the woods and fields surrounding it. In the Agricultural grounds there was an abundance of smooth, young grass, and from the beds of carefully cultivated flowers came a fragrance that sweetened the balmy air. Anna gazed intently at everything and wished that she might at the same time give all of her attention to the beauty of the grounds and the playfulness of the girls.

Mr. Roderick was not at the Smithsonian Institute when they arrived there, so the four watched the clerks as they hurried out of the building. When Janet began to be impatient Anna diplomatically proposed a play.

"As soon as papa comes Janet will rush off to those boys. So let's play he's Bluebeard and she's his wife and we're all Sister Anns. See those nice little towers on top of the office? Janet, you must

keep looking up there so you can't see Bluebeard, and—"

"Why, the people will think I'm *crazy!*" protested Janet.

"*Oh, please do!* What do you care? You must keep asking us, 'Do you see him, Sister Ann?' and when we holla down he's coming you must hurry away, and then you needn't be hung up by the hair."

Janet had never been fond of imaginative plays, and the request made her feel foolish. But to be obliging she strained her neck as she examined every detail of the top architecture.

"I wish Bluebeard would come before I have a broken neck," she groaned, and this opposite sentiment made the girls giggle.

"*Oh, my sister, my sister!*" wailed Bessie at last. "*There cometh a cloud of dust, and Bluebeard's in the middle!*"

"If it was 'dust to dust and ashes to ashes' you wouldn't care, would you?" laughed Janet, as she almost ran away.

Mr. Roderick's amazement was ludicrous. He was accustomed to having children flock about him and it was bewildering to have them shrink away

from him as if they were afraid of blows. He looked inquiringly from one to the other, which only made them continue their pantomime, but when he began to look hurt, Anna explained, while the girls made saucy comments.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXAMINATION DAY.

“**H**ISTORY, geography, arithmetic, grammar, botany, German, composition, spelling and singing. What do we know about all that?” sighed Nettie.

“Whole heaps, or else we’re idiots,” affirmed Daisy. “What do you suppose we’ve been doing all winter?”

“The bother of it is, do we know the parts Miss Ivah is going to ask about?” grumbled Anna. “I never had examinations at home and I’m afraid of them. I never could show off when I wanted to, and I’d like to make a hundred.”

“I ain’t bothered. I don’t care if I make fifteen,” giggled Cora. “I’ve studied hard enough, and if I can’t write it all out, it ain’t my fault.”

The blackboards were covered on both sides with questions. On each desk were long business-like sheets of paper.

“You’ll have to stay all night with Miss Ivah

if you have to fix all *them*," said Hattie. "I don't have to write. Miss Ivah's just going to ask me some questions."

"You're a lucky dog," began Daisy; and then, as she heard Miss Ivah's step, she quickly slid into her seat. With drooping shoulders and discouraged air she stared blankly at the blank paper before her.

Miss Ivah laughed. "If you keep as still as that all the morning I shall be thankful. Now, girls, if you attend solely to the examination you can finish with it this morning. Then in the afternoon I shall be glad to drive you all across the Potomac and through Fort Myer and Arlington Cemetery. Your mothers know you are to go driving with me one day this week. It is too bad I could not be sure when I could have father's horse."

"You'll have to drive us to the Insane Asylum after we go all through everything in one morning," said Bessie dismally.

"Gracious, yes! Everything in this wide, wide world would set anybody crazy," commented Daisy. "Oh, didn't you just cry and cry over that book? Nasty, mean woman! I'd have the girl run away and marry John before the book

ends, so people could have some satisfaction out of it."

As usual, it was Bessie who first remembered to be courteous. "It will be lovely to go riding with you, and I think it is lovely in you to bother with us all," she said gracefully. "You see if we don't behave as nice as can be. Only, when we get 'way out, where there isn't anybody, will you let us get out and shout?"

"All you want to. Do you mean to have a shouting contest?"

"That would be fun. You can examine us in that all you want to. We can yell, if we can't sing," said Daisy.

Dozens of ice-wagons passed by the school, and visions of sour pickles came into the minds of the scholars as they toiled through that list of questions. Exasperating flies darted in and out of the windows to show their freedom, and the tick of the clock goaded the girls to steady performance of duty. The sparrows chattered among the new green leaves and the hucksters called out the presence of "Strawberries!" and the ever-present "*Bananay!*" In the heat of a conflict virtue often fails. The test-questions were not particularly hard, but the

girls felt it would give them confidence and prevent failure if they compared answers. Diplomacy was to them an unstudied lesson, but nevertheless they knew it by heart; it was easy to attract attention and hold up a scrap of paper on which was written the number of a question. It took but a moment to grasp the answering name, date, or mere bone of the body of the question. They were thoughtless of the dishonesty and absorbed in the continued immunity from discovery.

"Cora!" said Miss Ivah at last. Cora jumped. She was stretching her arm to Bessie, the authority on arithmetic, and the jump made her lose her balance. Miss Ivah waited till she had righted herself. "Why are you communicating with Bessie?"

While Cora hesitated the scholars giggled to show they would tolerate no heroic screening of their faults. Bessie nodded for Cora to tell, so Cora answered, "I was asking Bessie what answer she got to the fifth example."

Miss Ivah stood up straight and stiff, with one hand on the table behind her. Her attitude reminded the girls of Miss Vesta. "You certainly know that I cannot allow that. If the rest of you have done the same, please say so."

No one cared to speak the ugly truth, but the eyes of all confessed. Each girl was wondering why another light would make the same thing look different. Straight, stiff and silent stood Miss Ivah.

"I don't see why it's anything," at last began Nettie. "We were just going to see if we were right. It's so much easier."

"Nevertheless, I must insist that you work without help. I shall just mention my surprise at such actions. You should be able to make all necessary comment."

The everyday smart of sin was pushed aside by their wonder at this puzzling end of the matter. Miss Ivah sat quietly in her chair by the table, with a book in her lap. While Cora had hesitated, the girls had decided that longer lessons and being kept in after school were not severe enough punishments for such a transgression. They could not imagine what their teacher would do, and now she had done—nothing. What was it that made her so—well, nice, of course—but so forgetful? It should have been Miss Vesta that caught them cheating, and then they would have been chastised.

The clock struck twelve, and Miss Ivah looked up for the first time. "Have you all finished?"

"I ain't done anything to twelve of 'em, and I ain't goin' to," said Cora. "I don't believe you got your questions out of the books we've studied."

"I have three more to answer," said Anna. She looked tired, but not harassed.

"What do you take so long for? I've been through ten minutes," said Daisy scornfully. "Why don't you say what you've got to say and be done with it?"

"I may have more to say than you," said Anna. Once in a while Daisy goaded Anna to sharp answers.

Daisy stared. "How many sheets did you use?" she demanded.

"All of them."

"My gracious, and you write small, too! I saved three of mine to write notes on." Daisy flashed a look at Miss Ivah and then continued, "I guess you did have more, or else you strung it out to make it look more. What's the sense in sticking words on?"

Anna's eyes flashed. She knew that she grasped history, geography, and the other studies in their relation to other things, and that Daisy understood and retained only the statements of books. It is

hard to have one's superiority denied by what one knows is inferior wisdom. But Anna had had much practice in controlling temper as well as body, so she said coldly,

"I never try to seem big, and you know it. The words I stick on *belong* on."

"I shall correct these papers and return them immediately," said Miss Ivah. "Anna, one of the girls can bring your papers to the dining-room when you finish."

The girls moved silently about the room till Anna laid down her pen. Bessie took up the papers to take them to Miss Ivah, but Daisy stopped her with an air of importance.

"You know the picture upstairs on the easel? That picture of the young man? Well, I believe he's Miss Ivah's lover, and he's coming home to-day."

This statement of belief received one minute of grave attention and reasoning, and then it was seconded and carried in a burst of laughter. But Nettie was matter-of-fact and puzzled.

"But where has he been, and how do you know anything about him?" she asked.

"Do you think she'd be so sweet to us if some-

body wasn't going to pay it back? But ain't it funny? I wish she would do something to us. I feel real mean; don't you?"

"If that's all you stopped me for—" said Bessie, scornfully, and she went on with the papers. She came back with a gleeful face. "I made ninety-eight; do you hear? Did any of you beat that? Miss Ivah corrected mine first. Miss Vesta's helping her; won't you feel awful if any of you make below seventy-five?"

Miss Ivah was still very sober of face when she returned the papers.

"Tell it all quick!" said Daisy. "Did Bessie really make ninety-eight?"

"Cora, fifty-one; Nettie, seventy-five; Daisy, ninety-two; Bessie, ninety-eight; Anna, one hundred," announced Miss Ivah. "Cora made no attempt to answer many questions. I am sure her mark would have been much higher if she had not been afraid to try."

Anna did not condole with, or congratulate, any one. She had but two thoughts—*I must not seem proud,—and I can tell the folks that I did the best that could be done, even in arithmetic* Miss Ivah gave no sympathy or attention to the

chatter, and anything so unusual was immediately noticed.

“What time is the carriage coming?” inquired Daisy in her most charming manner. “Will Bessie and I have time to race around the square to let off steam?”

“You will not have time, because recess is over and you must take your seats. The carriage is not coming this afternoon,” said Miss Ivah, calmly. “Here is more paper and a new list of questions. As the first examination was not a fair one, we shall be compelled to have a second one. Begin at once, and excuse me a moment.”

The door should have burned down and allowed the fiery eyes to scorch Miss Ivah before she turned down the hall. The chairs creaked under the increasing weight of anger. Then Cora giggled, and the girls stared at each other till giggling became infectious. The laughter ended at last in a long sigh.

“But isn’t she a darling, a daisy and a duck?” demanded Daisy, and simultaneously they answered, “She *is*.”

The question was just answered when they heard Miss Ivah’s footsteps again. The pens were

dropped and the hands clapped vigorously, but noiselessly, until the door opened. Two o'clock came, and the scholars went on searching the corners of their minds for needed facts. Janet came, and after a few words with Miss Ivah seated herself on the front porch and studied her Latin book. Mattie's mother sent a child of the neighborhood to make inquiry. Cora's mother called to inform her daughter that if she wanted to have her hair curled for dancing-school she must not stay at school after it was out.

At three-fifteen Miss Ivah bowed smilingly. "The carriage will be here promptly at one'clock to-morrow afternoon. There will be no lessons. In the morning we shall arrange for an entertainment for the last day of school."

Now the door should have been down, so that Miss Ivah could hear the warm praises.

"I thought we were to lose the drive," said Bessie. "It will be such fun to have a nice long play and be silly together before we say good-by for the summer. We ought to be all in one family. Mama wouldn't want to bring you all up, though."

"I shan't make a hundred again because I

couldn't remember a date," said Anna, mournfully. "When *was* St. Augustine built?"

"Oh, tear it down if you can't remember. I forget what I put," said Daisy. "We'll all make less, but that don't mean we know less. Who could turn out enough for two examinations in everything in one day? Now for home."

"Before you go—" said Anna, laughingly, and the girls paused at the door. "Miss Ivah is—what? A darling, a daisy and a duck?"

Loudly came the answer:

"*She is.*"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GOOD-BY ENTERTAINMENT.

IT was the last day of school and the importance of the day and the dainty summer dresses required entirely different speech and action, so each girl showed that she could soften fun and frankness if she wanted to and charm by sweetness and pleasantness, with an occasional flash of humor. It was really fun to them to present to Miss Ivah and to each other this neglected set of manners. Anna had been carried to the parlor upstairs, and sitting in the big easy-chair she felt almost like anyone else. She preferred to sit erect, but when she had declined pillows for the third time she made herself lean back, that others might be comfortable in supposing her comfortable. She despised lounging, and the unusual position made the back of her neck ache, but she preferred a pain like that to the pain of enduring unnecessary kind solicitude.

“Summer dresses are almost as pretty as Sunday dresses,” said Daisy.

"I think they are lots prettier than any other dresses," said Anna. "People look lovely in white, but I'm so glad some people will wear colors, because I do like them too."

"There he is," said Cora, pointing to the life-sized oil painting of a man's head. "I wonder if he came? Miss Ivah doesn't look any sillier than she did before."

"Miss Ivah wouldn't be silly. People can have beaux without making you sick, Cora Smith," said Bessie, indignantly. "Maybe if we had wanted people to come to our entertainment she would have asked him."

"Well, I think you're too funny," said Nettie, who had been gazing at the picture as she listened. "You don't know a thing about him. He may be Miss Ivah's brother or somebody. He might not be anybody at all, but just a picture."

The girls felt that on this occasion they should not make derisive remarks, but all laughed softly.

"Well, if that wasn't just a picture we wouldn't be talking like that to his face," said Daisy. She could not repress the remark, but the tone was mild.

"It is not a fancy picture, because it is not.

Look at it, and you can tell in a minute he is not,—because if it was, it would not—oh, I don't know how to say it, but it is *not*, I know."

Anna's wise criticism caused amusement that needed an outlet. Without perceptible invitation Cora and Daisy were quickly in each other's arms and moving about the room in a dance that was graceful when one looked at Cora and like a grasshopper when one looked at Daisy. In a few minutes Cora had had enough.

"I'll git so hot I'll forgit all the notes of my piece," she said. "Nettie, don't you forgit to count time. I reckon you'll put me out, and then Miss Ivah's folks will have to run."

"Well, aren't you glad we didn't ask people to come to see what we can do?" asked Bessie. "It's so much more fun to spout for ourselves; and then if we break down it doesn't matter. It was lots of fun rehearsing, wasn't it?"

For the sake of old acquaintance, they sang every song they had learned that winter, and of course they could not slight a single verse. The piano was square and the top was almost hidden by bunches of wild flowers. Miss Ivah wore three black-red velvet roses which Anna had plucked

from the Black Prince rose bush in her back yard. It was a valuable bush because it was one of the few of that kind which grew in Washington ; and the roses from it were given only to special friends of the Rodericks. The girls were surprised to find that Miss Ivah could play the piano, and were properly impressed by the fact that she had some idea of music. They sang sadly, "Toll, toll the bell at early break of day ;" and recklessly the song of the Indian girl who rode the rapids ; and mirthfully the story of the scolding woman who tied her husband's hands and then fell into the creek and died ; and mournfully of "Nellie Dale ;" and with patriotism of the historic bell-ringer ; and carelessly the song "Paddle your own canoe ;" and with hearty enjoyment, of all the other things and people they had often warbled about. It was a pretty group at the piano, although it was not a musical one. Anna smiled as she watched, and yet sighed as she thought of all the summer days that must come between the good-bys and the fall greetings. At The Grove she would have Nettie, and other girls with whom to play but none of whom entered that dear place in her heart where she had enshrined Miss Ivah's scholars.

As they sang the last piece Bessie wandered to the window. "Oh, Miss Ivah, there's somebody out there I'm going to ask to come in. He looks as if he wants to come in, and the girls won't mind him."

Without waiting for permission, she opened the door and ran down the stairway. Miss Ivah was astonished and doubtful, and the performers were so petrified with dismay that they did not even think of going to the window. A *boy* to hear their programme! Dreadful calamity! Bessie must be punished severely. Dumb and motionless they sat, while footsteps came near, and Bessie's voice said,

"We are up in the parlor this morning because we are having an entertainment. Oh, don't be bashful. You'll be a lovely audience." A pause. "Why, you aren't trying to get away, are you? I must say that's polite! No one will hurt you if you behave yourself. But you mustn't try to help us sing." A giggle. "You might put us out, you know."

There was no answering voice to prove the identity of the visitor. Bessie had stopped talking, and was puffing and blowing. That was strange,

because she had often run up and down those steps without any effort.

"Jim never says nothin',—I reckon it's him," said Cora.

"Come right in," said Bessie, and she very politely stood back and allowed Fritz to enter and jump wildly about Miss Ivah and sniff suspiciously at the strangers. Daisy screamed and jumped on a satin-covered chair, from which perch she scolded and laughed and grabbed Cora's head for support.

"It's *worse* than a boy!" she faltered. "Most boys know enough not to bite. Oh, Miss Ivah, make him go out, or else let me get on top of the piano. He can bite my toes now."

Fritz had protested vigorously against being dragged away from his play in the street and was happy to be exiled from the stupidity of such a place; so gentility once more ruled.

"A recitation by Miss Daisy Joy," announced Miss Ivah, with a mixture of mirth and solemnness which pleased the girls.

Daisy walked up to the piano, made bowing ridiculous, and without the least embarrassment proceeded to voice, in the verses called "Aunt Ta-

bitha," her contempt for unreasonable old age. If the listeners did not look into her eyes they forgot the elocutionist while they recognized the personality in the piece; but the bright eyes betrayed intense amusement at the successful doing of such a thing, and the audience grinned at the characters and the interpreter also.

Hand-clapping was generous and energetic, but the volume of sound could not be made satisfactorily loud, so admiring smiles, nods, nudges and pinches were added. Daisy was flushed, but still more amused than elated. She tried to evade the unique applause, but after an unbearably hard pinch she walked again to the piano.

"I don't know another thing. It was bad enough learning that. If you had tried to get all those lines in your head, you wouldn't have room for two more," she stated emphatically, and that was accepted as an encore.

"A piano duet by Miss Nettie Pauline and Miss Cora Smith," said Miss Ivah.

There was but little dignity in these two, so they were unable to hide their self-consciousness and their desire to laugh. Of course they twirled and re-twirled the piano-stool, and looked under the piano,

and had difficulty in putting backbone into their sheet-music; but the audience was at first patient and sympathetic, and then awed by the seeming difficulty of the selection. The treble tinkled and rippled and ran the scales and required crossed hands, and the bass rumbled and exploded and crowded into the higher notes and then hurried to strike the lowest key, while the treble flashed out a saucy strain as an ending.

Again the most sincere applause failed to bring reward. The young musicians had given their all, and not even the possibility of fame could induce them to repeat their performance. It had required all their pride to make them appear on the programme.

"Miss Anna Roderick will now favor us with a reading," said Miss Ivah, and all settled themselves comfortably, because they knew this number would not disappoint in any way.

Anna sat erect and opened her paper. Her first words were clearly and evenly pronounced, but her heart beat quickly, she was cold, and her hand trembled and made the paper rattle. She knew that it was absolutely ridiculous to be frightened, but her reasoning could not prevent the panic. Long prac-

tice had enabled her to control her voice, no matter what the state of her feeling, so she did not disgrace herself. Her selection was negro dialect, which had always been an easy language to her. She loved and venerated the old-time darkies of books, and saw only the best characteristics of those of her acquaintance. The humor and pathos of the story touched her, and she tried to impress it on her listeners. When she finished no one clapped. The form of praise was a look of wonder from all.

"You say it as good as if you had had a colored mammy," said Daisy.

"Now you can't refuse to come out again, because there is a whole paper full of things you can read," said Bessie. "Read another story as good as that one."

"Some other day," said Anna. She liked to read aloud and to people who were much impressed, but modesty forbade that she should be the first to respond to a second call. "I want to see what you are to do. Isn't she next, Miss Ivah?"

"A vocal duet by Miss Joy and Miss May," answered Miss Ivah, and seating herself at the piano she played the opening chords of "The Old

Oaken Bucket." The piece was pleasing to the scholars, so it did not matter that Bessie's alto notes lost themselves in the verse. The chorus was the compensation; it made every one beat time with their heads.

"I knew you wouldn't give us another, so I made one for you to read," said Anna, handing a penciled slip of paper to Miss Ivah. The singers stood by her and read:

"The oh-eld oak-hen buck-hit,
The i-run bound buck-hit,
The moss cov-ered buck-hit
That hun-gin the well."

"We didn't say it that way at all!" exclaimed Daisy, indignantly. She refrained from adding anything ugly, but she thought that Anna was a mean, stuck-up piece! Bessie said nothing, but she put on the cold look that Anna had been so glad to miss.

"Oh, *dear!*" said Anna impatiently. "Why do you take things to yourself? That's the way that piece always sounds to me, and I thought you'd think it was funny to see the words changed. Of course you didn't sing it that way; nobody does. But anyway, don't you like to laugh at a funny thing, even if it's yourself?"

"No, I don't," said Daisy promptly. "But as you were not laughing at us, it's all right."

"A solo by Miss Mattie King," said Miss Ivah, and the girls stared. Expressions of surprise and amusement quickly changed to wonder and respect as they listened to the sweet song and singing about spring sunshine and flowers. At the end, Daisy coolly took the tea-rose from Anna's dress and presented it to the prima-donna.

"You can sing better than any of us, and it's funny we never found it out," she said.

"We have been rehearsing solos for some time. We wanted to surprise you," said Miss Ivah.

"Well, it was a surprise; and now, Miss Ivah, *you* must sing something for us," said Nettie. That was a spark to light a fire of urging which could be quenched only by compliance. School was over, and there was no need for unmoved dignity; so the teacher played jigs and sang funny scraps of song without stopping till some one looked at Anna's watch. There were exclamations of surprise, then quietly and silently all left the room, and in a few minutes a voice outside called,

"Miss Ivah!"

"We aren't going to say good-by," said Daisy,

as Miss Ivah looked out of the window. "We hate good-by ; but we'll wave to you. Look !"

There was a mixture of waving arms and handkerchiefs, and then Miss Ivah's scholars parted at the gate.

CHAPTER XV.

AN OASIS.

THE Rodericks were to move to The Grove on the first of July. Nettie was already there, Bessie was somewhere out of the city, and the rest of the scholars were busy with home interests. When Anna parted from them all she had no expectation or hope of seeing them again till school opened. Her training had made her sensible and cheerful, so there was no soreness or sadness of spirit when she told herself that they would not care to visit her. But she did wish she could have them all as guests at The Grove, and make them have a splendid time while she looked on. As the youth of her schoolmates, the carefulness of mothers and the small size of the Rodericks' cottage were insurmountable obstacles, Anna stopped wishing and read story-books all through June.

"I'll stay in the dining-room to-day. The oven's too hot to go any nearer to it," she said, one day in the middle of the month.

"What oven?" curiously asked Clifford.

"The idea of your asking—and you such a smart boy. Think a minute," urged Anna. "What is it that makes the kitchen hot?"

"The stove," promptly responded Clifford, but he was more puzzled than ever. "That's right next to the dining-room."

"Never mind that. Now if the stove makes the kitchen hot, what is it that makes the world hot?" Anna loved to teach, and thought her method very wise.

"The bonfires that boys make?" ventured Clifford.

Anna thought it criminal to laugh at a pupil, so she repressed all amusement. "And you a Roderick!" she sighed. "No, sir; not the bonfires that boys make. The police are supposed to put those out in the city, but did you ever see a policeman try to put out the sun?"

"Oh, oh! I see!" exclaimed Clifford. "It's the sun that makes the world hot, and if you go in the third story you are real near the oven. If I stayed on the roof awhile I'd be baked like an Irish potato, wouldn't I?"

"You're Irish anyway, because you can see a joke your size right away," said Anna, approvingly.

"It doesn't matter if it takes you longer to see a fact."

"What are you going to do, Anna? Shall I get you anything?" asked Mrs. Roderick.

"It's too hot to do anything but read. Can't somebody go somewhere and get me some books?"

Janet groaned and Clifford stretched his arms. Both were accustomed to this demand; each was practiced in the art of borrowing and carrying books.

"If you wanted only one book it wouldn't be so bad, but when it takes three a day!" laughingly grumbled Janet. "Mama, do you know a single soul we haven't been to? The idea of the Capitol City having a free library so small that you can't get in it! Why, it's the narrowest place, and looks like any of the other flat-front houses on New York Avenue. Just wait till they build one over the whole of a square, as they ought! But then we'll have to hire a carriage and coachman to trot back and forth every hour. Well, Anna, my hat is on the rack. As soon as you think of a name I'll go and demand 'The book or your life!'"

Anna's desperate thinking was interrupted by a ring of the door-bell.

"Hullo, Clifford. Is Anna in?" asked a familiar voice.

"Why, it's Daisy!" murmured Anna. Her bewilderment was comical. "I'm so—glad to see you," she said, as Daisy's saucy face peeped into the dining-room.

"And so—surprised," said Daisy, mimicking her tone. "It *is* pretty hot, but I'm pretty well, thank you."

"Well, indeed I am delighted to see you," gushed Janet. "Now I won't have to run around the city for a stack of books. I hope you can stay a long time and talk Anna sleepy."

"I've got to go right home," said Daisy, and mischievously paused. Anna's face fell, and Janet looked as though she regretted her speech. "Mama's out, and I've got to mind the house. I came to see if Anna can go home with me. There is nice shade in our yard."

Anna allowed her pleasure to be seen, but carefully hid all evidence of the wondering and questioning in her mind. After all her sensible conclusions, this was certainly a surprise. What had prompted Daisy to such a delightful proceeding? To have her company for an hour was boon

enough ; to have it at her own home, which Anna had longed to see, was almost too much joy. Perhaps those interesting boys of real life would pass through the yard while she was there.

"That will be so nice, Daisy," said Mrs. Roderick, quietly. "I will put a white dress on Anna and then she will be ready."

Anna had always lived in a brick house with a flat front and with sides that halved expense with the two neighbors' sides. Daisy's home held up its own four grey walls and its bay-windows, and proudly presented three porches. She wheeled Anna's chair close to the steps of the side porch because the sun was just then shading the part of the yard which was next to the street. She took off her straw hat, fanned herself vigorously, flung it down, and then grabbed it up again.

"Ants," she explained. "Nasty red ones. Look ! see them swarming ? I forgot they were here. They're dreadful up on the porch. I'll take the last step, because they're not so fond of that ; if a few of 'em do bite, I can slap 'em. I'm going to get Congress to change the name of our street from M to A Street. Then it'll stand for something."

"Then you'll have to go to the Capitol every

day to push your bill," said Anna, laughingly. "Congressmen don't attend to their business unless other people make them," she continued, with a desire to show how much she knew about the government of the United States.

All through the afternoon they chattered, joked, argued, and smilingly allowed each other the privilege of independent thinking. At last the gate clicked and a stout lady came slowly up the walk and around to the side porch. Anna trembled with apprehension and pleasure, because she guessed that at last she was seeing Daisy's mother.

"Well, mama, I thought you were never coming back," said Daisy.

"Funerals take so long; I've been away out to Congressional Cemetery. I suppose this is Anna Roderick. I am very glad to see you; Daisy has talked so much of you," said Mrs. Joy, as she extended her hand. "Isn't it hot? I must show you a picture of my nieces."

Anna admired the photograph and tried hard to show that she did, but she had a miserable feeling of failure; just because she knew that this meeting was so much to her and of no value to Mrs. Joy, she was nervous and constrained. Mrs. Joy's

manner was pleasant, polite, and easy, but Anna felt that she was a little displeased about something. As Mrs. Joy went into the house Anna asked, hesitatingly,

“Daisy, did your mother know you were going to bring me here?”

“No, I didn’t think of it till after she had gone,” said Daisy, carelessly. Then as she glanced at Anna she added, “But that doesn’t make any difference. She is glad to have the girls come here. She’d rather have a pack of ’em here than have me at their house.”

“Well, I’m not a pack of them and I furnish my own seat,” laughed Anna. She could not see and consequently could not remove the entire cause of displeasure, and she was having too good a time to think about unpleasant things she could not remedy. Beside, she did not wish to make Daisy uncomfortable.

“Don’t you want to see Daniel Webster?” asked Daisy, gravely. “He’s such a nice gentleman, and behaves so much better than Henry Clay.”

Anna was mystified, but with those younger than herself she always had an answer ready. “Where do you keep your ghosts?” she asked.

"In a cage near the back porch. I'll show you."

Mrs. Joy was at one of the back windows. As they passed Anna looked up and smiled, and wished she could think of the proper and appropriate remark to make. She was ready to like all mothers, and Mrs. Joy was nice, even if she was displeased. The two white rabbits blinked solemnly at the admiring visitor as Daisy poked cabbage-leaves through the wire, so that Anna might see them forsake dignity and scramble for the food.

"Daniel Webster got out the other day. We found him in the house chewing the big dictionary. I guess he was mad at himself for making the old thing."

"Oh, but wasn't it Noah Webster who made the dictionary?" If Anna had been sure about it she would not have spoken, but she thought Daisy might answer the question that had suddenly come to her mind.

"Was it? Well, that makes it all the worse. Daniel had no business to eat up his brother's book. He shan't have another leaf, just because," said Daisy, with enjoyment of the chance to be lawfully vindictive.

"That will punish Henry Clay, too," remonstrated Anna.

"Well, that's what the Bible says will happen, and I'm not going against the Bible," virtuously. "I've forgotten the verse, but I guess you know it."

"'The innocent shall suffer for the guilty?'" Anna thoroughly appreciated the conceit.

"Yes, that's it. So you see, Mr. Daniel, how your badness makes Henry Clay suffer. Anna, we're around this far, so I'll show you the yard and the garden on the other side. We don't attend to the flowers much, but some of them grow anyway."

They passed by the stable and saw the carriage that Anna had often seen stop at school for Daisy on rainy days. Near that, croquet wickets were set up ready for the next game.

"You see the ground ain't sanded and rolled, so our croquet is different. It's lots of fun playing on grass. You think you're going to do up your enemy, and you knock yourself way out."

"Oh, forget-me-nots!" exclaimed Anna, as they passed a small bed of them by the graveled walk. "I wonder what they call the kind that grows out in gardens? It is so much prettier than that you

buy at the florist's. I do love forget-me-nots." She thought only of praising, and pleasing Daisy by her appreciation, but then in a minute she was miserable because she thought that Daisy might misunderstand her motive. "Oh, if she thinks she must pick a lot for me I shall *die*! Why can't people be sensible?" she thought.

Daisy did not see the supposed obligation, however. She showed that she was surprised at warm praise of such a common flower; then pulled a stalk for Anna and stuck another in the embroidery of her dress. While Anna was still thankful, a turn in the walk brought them to a comfortable part of the yard. The thick foliage of the trees kept the sun from a young boy stretched out in a hammock; Anna had just time to note the appearance of laziness and strength when he slowly sat up.

"How d'ye do, Anna? I haven't seen you for a long time, but Daisy lets us hear of you," he said quickly, and then he had used all the words he had to say to the invalid. While Anna repeated his first three words he swung his feet, and then managed to add, "Hot, isn't it? Didn't you scorch coming down?"

"Oh, no; I didn't notice the heat at all," re-

plied Anna. She was glad and yet sorry that she had again met Daisy's brother ; if he would not talk to her, and would then go to sleep so that she could study his face, there would be only pleasure in the encounter.

"You're lucky. I'm roasting," said Robert, and he lay back again with only a smile as excuse. He had been polite ; now let Daisy entertain her own company.

"Arthur, get up and let me sit there," said Daisy. Anna had not noticed the little boy sitting in the board swing that hung from the pear-tree. She was surprised when he obediently moved himself to a rustic bench which had lost its seat.

"I didn't know you had a little brother," said Anna.

"I did, then ; he's a perfect rascal. He's only four, but he would put on pants, and he's been worse than ever, since then," said Daisy calmly.

Anna gasped at this unmerciful recital of faults and turned to the child with the wish to comfort ; but he looked as comfortable as before, and grinned pleasantly in response to her smile. Evidently speech was free and not hurtful in this family. Just then a bat and ball were flung on the grass and the

long legs of another boy followed them. Anna's heart thumped.

"Why, how do?" said Lowry, as he met Anna's look, and then he dropped his eyes. "How are you?"

"Very well," dutifully answered Anna, but she wanted to add that she was not any better for the asking; she was so tired of the question. "There's nothing the matter with my health," she thought resentfully. "I'm not any more likely to have chicken-pox and scarlet fever than you are."

"Go make me some lemonade, Daisy," said Lowry.

"I guess not. I never get it sweet enough for you, and you'll have me trotting back and forth for sugar."

"Well, go up to the house and tell Emma to make it."

"I guess I can do that, because I want some myself," sighed Daisy. Anna could hear her walking slowly up the path and longed to hurry the feet, for she was intensely nervous because of the desertion. She was afraid if she addressed the little boy he would not answer, and she had nothing whatever to say to the young gentlemen.

After a painful silence the elder brother roused himself.

"Do you like to go to school?" he asked, kindly.

"Very much." Anna could easily amplify in writing, but had not yet learned to do so in speech.

"I suppose you read a lot."

"A great deal." Every one asked that.

"That's more than I do. I think reading is rather a bore." He suppressed a yawn, and then added, "I get too much at Prep."

Anna did not dare reveal her scorn to this lord of creation. "There are different kinds of books," she ventured to explain.

"That's so ; and I suppose if I had more time I would like to read story books." Another yawn.

"Sometimes I read a poem, an essay and some history," said Anna, demurely.

There was voiceless surprise which lasted until Daisy returned. "Emma says if you will wait long enough for it you will get it."

Anna detested lemonade, but she accepted and drank a glassful because it was offered by the young lady tom-boy whom she secretly adored. She saw her favorite type of girl for only a few

minutes, but it was long enough to admire the rich red of her lips and decide that she was pretty even if Daisy did not think so.

"Let's go back to the ant-house," proposed Daisy. "I want to show you a book of plays, and see which you think is the best. Some of us girls are going to act one just for fun."

Mrs. Joy was leaning out of the kitchen window as they went back. "I am cooking dinner to-day. My girl is having a holiday," she said.

Dinner! Anna had first a chill and then a fever. The afternoon had seemed so short, but now she knew that she must have been there some time; she had no idea what the clock would tell and tremblingly she asked.

"Nearly half-past five," said Mrs. Joy, politely.

Anna was dismayed into silence. Five was the Rodericks' dinner time, but that did not matter, because she knew her mother would not mind if she was late, but how she hoped that the Joys dined at the fashionable hour!

"Won't you stay and have dinner with us?" smoothly asked Mrs. Joy.

Anna winced. Was Daisy's mother hinting because she thought the visitor did not yet know

her fault? "Oh, no, I thank you," said Anna, with brave composure. "I must go now, if Daisy is ready. I am sorry I can't read the plays, Daisy, but I had no idea it was so late."

"Wait a minute." Mrs. Joy stepped back from the window, and then handed out an umbrella and a car-ticket. "I want you to ride home, Daisy. Don't try to walk; and hold that umbrella over you all the time you walk that square you can't ride. The sun is fearfully hot, and bad for you."

Now Anna was badly hurt, and she shut her lips tightly to keep them steady. The agony, humiliation and helplessness of the situation made her feel sick. How could Mrs. Joy say that? She knew that Anna must be taken home, and surely could guess that she was already thoroughly uncomfortable. Over and over, as Daisy pushed her quickly along the street, Anna said to herself, "Would a seven-square walk in the declining sun ruin a girl's health?"

When two squares and a half from home they met Clifford going for Anna, and she was glad to part with any one by the name of Joy. While she ate her dinner alone, she thought "It was perfectly lovely in Daisy to come for me, and I had a lovely

time, and Mrs. Joy is lovely,—but I don't like her one bit! She makes me smart and burn! I think she will scold Daisy for having me there."

When the Rodericks were again settled at The Grove, the boys and girls made "Oak Cottage" the headquarters for pleasure until the camp-meetings began. Then they gathered there quietly, and when any one forgot and spoke loudly or romped, they enjoyed enforcing silence until they had pushed Anna to the top of Fourth Avenue hill, where the big chestnut tree made a splendid roof for their pleasure ground. A rope swing was on one limb; the largest limb grew almost in a horizontal line, and was just high enough to be beyond reach. The girls went up the trunk on a nail ladder, and then crawled only half-way out on the branch, from which perch they surveyed the surrounding country, and wrote letters, cut soap-stone into various shapes, or cut long, thin switches which would sting; but the boys jumped, swung, scrambled and conquered every inch. Anna read aloud and told stories whenever called upon, and treasured every leaf and twig thrown down as applause. When the spirit demanded a change, the comrades traveled a little farther on to "The Knoll." It was near

enough to the boundary fence to cause the thought of possible tramps, but was within sight of the cottages, so that the fear was only pleasantly exciting. An exhibition of juvenile talent in song and recitation, and dainty food were the invariable entertainments provided.

One evening just before a meeting in the tabernacle there was a noisy group around Anna in the yard, while Mrs. Roderick entertained a lady on the porch. Anna's attention was suddenly drawn from her friends as she heard the lady remark,

"She seems to charm them all; she always has a crowd around her. Why, if I let my daughter come here as often as she would like, you would have to turn her out."

Anna was instantly hot with pleasure. She was glad the others had not heard because she did not want them to be conscious that they were attracted to her, and she deliberately made a funny speech that a laugh might drown Mrs. Roderick's answer.

"They *do* like to come here, and I hope they like me," she thought. "We do have some nice times. They are nearly over, but then I don't mind so much because I'll have those girls at the school!"

CHAPTER XVI.

A TEN O'CLOCK SCHOLAR.

“ A dillar, a dollar,
A ten o'clock scholar,
What makes you come so soon !”

ONE day after school had begun again, a new girl walked leisurely into the school-room about an hour after the opening time.

The neat examples and the smeary examples had been washed off the several slates with the same sponge ; and while Miss Ivah talked with the expected new scholar, Anna's slate presented a tempting blank for the applicable Mother Goose rhyme. The expectation of a perfect lesson and the realization of two crosses instead of all *R*'s over her examples had corrupted the influential scholar. She did not care if her wrong-doing would put the others in a mischievous mood ; she did not care if they gave Miss Ivah whole pecks of trouble.

“ My name is Leauase Masters. You have to

say Louise, but it's spelled L-e-a-u-a-s-e. That's French, you know." The fat girl with black hair and a muddy, stupid face seemed to be giving this information to Miss Ivah, but all her attention was given to the scholars. "Mama thinks Nettie Pauline has made all the arrangements for me to come here to school, but I told her to wait till I came to see how I like it. You see, I don't have to go to school if I don't want to. I told mama to get me out of bed at half-past eight this morning, but she didn't do it till nine. I knew I was late then, so there wasn't any use in hurrying."

"She didn't tell me any such thing," muttered Nettie. "She knows she told me to make everything all right with Miss Ivah. I see myself getting in that box again. Did you ever know such a story-teller?"

"Nettie and I understood that you were to begin school this morning, and tardiness is not a good beginning. But perhaps your arrangement is best," said Miss Ivah quietly. "I think you will be comfortable in this chair. We do not think of compelling your attendance, but we hope you will see that we have very pleasant times over our lessons."

Every scholar cleared her throat to attract Miss Ivah's attention and the teacher's formality subsided into a quick smile. The twelve-year-old girl's self-importance was disagreeable, but since there were appreciators of the humor in the situation she would look only at that side.

"Oh, are you only that far in geography?" asked Miss Leauase Masters, after she had seen the girls point out rivers and mountains on the map of the United States. "I have been way past that—to every place in the world. I should think you would be tired of North America."

The girls were beginning to respect knowledge, so they did not resent this stranger's possession of it, but they were amused at her frank claiming of so much. Anna saw that no one but herself was contemptuous, so she resolved to hide her unfavorable impression.

"We have just begun school and are reviewing our last year's work," explained Miss Ivah. "If we have forgotten anything we shall be glad to have you prompt us, so we need not refer to the book."

In the girls' opinion it was very delightful to have such chances to show what they knew, and

they wondered why Miss Leauase did not look as pleased as she should.

“Oh, gracious, Miss Ivah, I’ve forgotten there was such a thing as the Monongahela River,” said Daisy, in the middle of the lesson. “I know we belong to the Mongolian race, but that is the best I can do for you.”

There was an expectant pause ; the old scholars glanced at the visitor and waited for her to present that particular bit of knowledge as easily as Miss Ivah could do it. Miss Leauase, however, said not a word ; she was carefully arranging the folds of her dress and her face lacked any thought of rivers or of correcting mistakes. The scholars stared and the teacher suppressed a smile.

“Did you ever see such a heathen Chineese?” whispered Nettie to Cora.

The Monongahela was a lost river, and could not be located by any one, so Miss Ivah at last asked the visitor to help the scholars. All eyes watched as she took the pointer from Miss Ivah’s hand and walked slowly to the board. Behind her back there were uplifted hands and eyebrows as she turned to the left of the map and seemed to be staring at the Pacific seacoast. There she



A TEN O'CLOCK SCHOLAR.

patted her hand with the pointer, and mused so long that Cora lost control of herself and stumbled against the stiff figure. It was a saving roughness, for as Miss Leauase neared the Atlantic coast Bessie kindly shoved the helpless hand into the State of Pennsylvania. Miss Leauase Masters kept it there, but she partly redeemed herself by continued silence.

"Ah, yes ; that is correct. Thank you," said Miss Ivah, and she quickly asked another question.

Perhaps the visitor thought that no one had noticed Cora's seemingly accidental movement of her hand. She put on a smile and said, impressively, "It's so interesting when you get to England ; and then when you get through with that you cross the Strait of—er—of Clover, to Africa. It's nice to *study* about that, but you'd freeze if you were really there, you know."

Anna suddenly turned a perfectly serious face to the visitor. "Isn't the Strait of Clover a pretty name?" she asked, in a friendly manner. "I suppose they named it that because pink clover grows on both sides, and you can smell it when you cross over in a row-boat." A breathless silence followed,

which frightened even Anna because it was entirely unusual for her to go out of her way to embarrass any one.

"The books don't say why they named it that," said Miss Leauase Masters, coldly. The other girls seemed dazed at first, but when they understood what the model scholar had done they grinned broadly and silently clapped their hands. At recess, the visitor carelessly asked to be directed to the nearest candy store and said that she would treat them to candy because that was expected of all newcomers.

"She's just at my hotel, you know," eagerly began Nettie, as soon as Miss Leauase Masters had started for the store. "She sits next to me at meals, and I thought she was quite nice. She talks as if she has all the money she wants and she's French and has been to ever so many places, and her father's something big in the Government. I told her about this school because I thought Miss Ivah 'd like to have another scholar. I guess if she stops putting on airs she'll be all right—don't you think so?" Anxiously she awaited decision because she did not want to be held responsible for the disagreeable characteristics of the girl.

"She's so fat," objected Cora.

"Ask her to give you some of her fat," said Daisy, crushingly. "I think it will be nice to have a French girl in our school. Let's ask her to talk French for us. Nobody wants her old candy, though."

"Just let me tell you," said Anna. "It doesn't matter that she's fat, and we needn't take her candy, and I like French people—if she is French. But I knew a girl when she was studying French, and she had a sister named Louise, and Louise told me that she knew one word in French, and that was *Louise*, because the French and the English word meant the same thing, and were spelled just exactly alike! Now will you ask her to talk French?"

Condemnation and disgust were in every face because they never doubted Anna or any authority she quoted.

"Well, everybody can't know everything. You can't shoot people for making mistakes," said Daisy, who, for no reason at all, was perversely inclined to defend the visitor.

"They needn't pretend," said Anna, scornfully.

"Well, if she's travelled around so far she can't have been in school much, and I guess she's ashamed," persisted Daisy.

"And I always thought French people were slim and lively," continued Anna, still speaking with emphatic scorn.

"Well, Anna Roderick, you don't know *everything*!" said Daisy, making a face. "She'll be just enough to make the sides even when we play Prisoners' Base. We can teach her enough to do that. My! that's a big bag of candy she bought. I guess we might as well help her get through with it."

After being rebuked because of that girl Anna did not feel much like being pleasant, but she managed the conversation so that there should be no awkwardness, and accepted one piece of candy to show that she was not unfriendly.

"You're sure your mother would let you have it?" asked Leauase with disagreeable solicitude. "I wouldn't want to make you sick. Do you have to stay at home many days? So many sick people and babies beg me for candy and their mothers tell me not to give them any, so I can't do it."

"I did not miss a day all last winter, and mama trusts me to know when I can eat candy," pleasantly answered Anna, though it required an effort to do so after her sacrifice to friendliness.

"Candy never hurts you, anyhow," said Bessie, with a little indignation in her voice. "Don't you remember all those pickles and limes and peppermint drops and wintergreen and lemon drops you ate last spring?"

"Maybe you'd be better if you hadn't eaten them," persisted Leauase, with an air of wisdom.

"She's been in a wheel-chair longer than last spring," said Daisy, bluntly. "She isn't one of those—"

"Anna ain't a bit sick; it's just her legs won't walk for her," gravely explained Mattie.

"That is just it, Mattie," said Anna, laughing unconstrainedly. "I don't have medicine bottles and beef-tea around me all the time."

"You're lots better fun than a lot of sticks who can hop and run," asserted Cora, without any embarrassment. The rest could not speak so frankly before Anna, but they nodded assent.

"It's raining. You'll all get rheumatism and have to ride in a chair like Anna if you stay out here," said Mattie.

"There are five minutes more of recess so Bessie and I are going to sing a song for the company," announced Daisy. "This is the way we have to

do." They put their arms about each other, put their heads affectionately together, and sang gustily,

"Comrades, comrades ever since we were boys,
Sharing each other's sorrows, sharing each other's joys ;
Comrades when manhood was dawning, faithful whate'er
may betide,
When I was called to my darling, oh, comrade was there
by my side."

All but one of the audience hugged imaginary friends and produced sounding kisses as applause. Miss Leauase Masters stared disdainfully and remarked,

"My music teacher won't let me play street songs ; she is very particular. Anyway, that is a boy's song."

"It's queer you don't like M. M. Barker's daughter, if you're so fond of this dear," whispered Anna to Daisy. Aloud she added, "I know some better words for that tune. I made them up myself, so you must say they are fine. Listen !" With mischievous eyes intent upon the harsh critic she sang rapidly,

"Come rats, come rats, ever since we were mice,
Sharing each other's cheeses and everything else that's
nice ;

Comrades when rathood was dawning, faithful whate'er
may betide,
When I was caught in a trap, oh, comrade was there by
my side."

This received unmerited laughter and appreciation. When all had exclaimed and praised, Miss Leauase Masters said calmly,

"Your voice cracked three times. Did you know it? It sounded so funny."

CHAPTER XVII.

CURIOSITY KILLED ITSELF.

“GOOD-MORNING, Leauase. I did not expect to see you this morning,” said Miss Ivah the next morning as the girl walked in the school-room at three minutes of nine.

“Well, I didn’t know that Nettie started so soon. I knocked at her door, and her mother said she’d been gone a long time ; but I’m not late. I had a time getting myself up so early this morning,” said Leauase, as she took off her hat and hung it beside the others. She smoothed her straight hair with her hand and then turned around to the surprised teacher. “Where shall I sit?”

“I have not thought about it. When you left yesterday you said nothing about coming, and Nettie said you had not spoken of making arrangements.”

“Mama said she supposed I’d have to pay some in advance, but Nettie said she didn’t ; so I suppose it’s all right, isn’t it?”

"Oh, yes, it is all right if you have decided to come," said Miss Ivah, deciding to allow liberty of action for awhile. "Bessie, will you change your things to the desk near the window and let Louise have your seat? Anna has more time to give any necessary help to a newcomer."

Anna would not show that she disliked the change. She was sure Leauase did not wish to have help from her, but as there was nothing else to be done, she was as friendly as her neighbor would allow.

"We are to review grammar this morning, and that will be a good way to find out whether you should go in the class with Anna or with the other girls." Miss Ivah's kindly glance was wasted. Leauase appeared oblivious to the necessity of any intercourse between herself and the teacher; all of her attention was centered upon the physique and clothes of her school-mates.

"Miss Ivah, my mother says little girls must answer when they're spoken to," remarked Mattie.

"Your mother is right, and I hope that you will always—" began Miss Ivah, but a loud snicker made her pause. She choked back a laugh and asked, composedly, "What is it, girls?"

"Miss Gannet, don't you think they're queer girls? They're always laughing at something. I didn't see anything happen," said Leauase, after she had twisted around in her seat. "Do you let us talk right out?"

When the lesson began the new scholar had the advantage of hearing all the others analyze the sentences on the board before she was again asked to prove her knowledge.

"What is the subject of the sixth sentence," asked Miss Ivah.

"The subject—"

"Yes?"

"The subject is—"

"Yes, the subject is what?"

"The subject of the sentence—"

Miss Ivah turned to the board and put her finger at the beginning. "This is the one. First tell us the subject, and then the predicate."

Leauase looked into Anna's eyes without any expression of pleading, but Anna impulsively made her lips frame the words "The farm," and then she felt as if she had been banished from Eden because she had yielded to the temptation to cheat, even if it was for the benefit of another.

"That's right. Now the predicate," said Miss Ivah. Again she turned to the board, so that she would not retard the development of thought.

"'Is the best in the State,'" recklessly whispered Anna, and Leauase blindly repeated. She showed no gratitude for the help, but Anna continued to give it and was more angry and miserable every time there was necessity for prompting. At the noon recess Leauase said that she had a bad headache, and was excused for the afternoon.

"That is too bad. I was going to return your treat, but I'll try to keep the money in my pocket till to-morrow," said Daisy.

"You can go with me as far as the store, and I'll eat my share on the way home. Candy always makes my headaches better," said Leauase, coolly.

Daisy hid her surprise and answered promptly, "That's what I'll do if you'll talk some French before you go. We don't any of us know it, and we want to see how it sounds. I think it's lovely you can do it."

"What kind of candy are you going to get?" asked Leauase. "I like chocolate creams the best. I hope you don't like peppermint drops. They are so vulgar." She seemed to think that Daisy's re-

quest did not deserve an answer. A dozen indignant eyes should have disturbed her serenity, but again she admired her dress as she waited for an answer.

"My mother says—" began Mattie, but Bessie stopped her.

"I shall get something we all like," said Daisy, a little stiffly. "But never mind that. We want you to say just a few French words. What is 'I think you're awful nice' in French?"

"Come on; if you don't hurry I won't get to the hotel till everybody's eaten the best of everything," said Leauase, still calmly disregarding everything but her own wish. She walked on and pulled Daisy after her. Daisy obeyed, but she made her heels kick back a most meaning comment, and the girls clapped wildly. Afterward while tenderly cherishing her small share of chocolate creams Daisy betrayed the fact that Leauase had peevishly exclaimed, "They ought to know that clapping hurts my head. They're so noisy."

The next day when Anna reached the school-room Bessie was moving her things back to the desk beside Anna's. "Oh, I am so glad Miss Ivah has moved that girl!" she exclaimed.

"Miss Ivah hasn't moved her."

"Oh, you are not doing it without—"

"Oh, no ; she's *not*," snapped Daisy. "Everybody beside you ain't wicked."

"Leauase Masters isn't coming any more," said Nettie.

"Why not?" Anna was much surprised and very much relieved.

Nettie hesitated and flushed. "Well, she said she wasn't."

"But why? Of course if it were me I'd be ashamed to come ; but she didn't seem to know that she didn't know anything."

"Didn't you tell her that grammar?" questioned Cora. "I believe she's a bigger dunce than I am."

"I don't know what made me tell her ; I'm ashamed that I did. But, Nettie, why did she say she wasn't coming?"

"She said she wasn't coming here to teach French for nothing." Daisy thought the joke would silence Anna.

"Did she really? No, of course not. But what did she say, then? Is it so awful? Oh, is there an objection to my knowing? Why, I can see that

all of you know." Anna paused to wonder if she should be hurt because she was left out. "You're just trying to tease me. Do tell."

All but Bessie stood so that their faces could not be easily seen. She spread out her arms and bowed. "I'll tell you all you want to know if you'll tell me first." She straightened up, laughed, and added, "You didn't expect Nettie to get much out of Miss L-e-a-u-a-s-e Masters, did you?"

Anna laughed and quietly turned to her desk, but all the morning, as she worked over her lessons, her curiosity became stronger; the mystery was so tantalizing and interesting; that there was something to tell she was sure, and Bessie's pretty subterfuge strengthened the belief. Half the time she thought they wished to tease her, and would be disappointed if she did not return the teasing. Then she thought that they were just as mean as they could be to have a secret from her. She would find out in some way, just because! She wondered why Miss Ivah allowed Nettie and Bessie to go together to the bath-room to wet their slate rags, when the rule was that only one should be absent from the school-room at one time, and then usually they used her sponge. Later, Nettie and Daisy

were permitted to go together to wash out their rags ; usually dirty rags were tossed into the wastebasket. Then Nettie and Cora slid out of the room without any audible excuse and Miss Ivah did not become stern. Why was Nettie such a favorite ? Anna made a big blot on her sample sentences when she suddenly guessed. They wanted to talk about their secret, and of course Nettie was the one who started it. Then Miss Ivah must know, too. Well, it would not be long before it was known to every one in the school. At recess Anna detained Miss Ivah.

“So you are not to have a fine French scholar. Wasn't she funny ? But why isn't she coming ? School opened before the girls told me.”

“I'm sure she does not know what is in her mind. My sister told me to send her a bill for two days' tuition and impudence, but I shall not do that.” Miss Ivah laughed as she left the room.

Anna turned determinedly to the restless girls. “What on earth were you doing out of the room so much ?”

“Why, Miss Ivah said we could go to the bathroom to do our week's washing,” answered Bessie. “Slate rags and cloths get dirty, you know.”

“Oh, yes, I know. But I don’t think it was very well done. You talked too much; and I know what you were talking about, too.”

The girls exchanged glances and that encouraged Anna to renew the attack.

“You were talking about your old secret, and that’s why that girl isn’t coming back, and I know why, so I think you might tell just what she said.”

Still all were silent except Cora. “Well, I reckon you’ll fuss and fret, and it ain’t much, so I’ll tell you if you want to know so bad. It ain’t much of a secret. She said she wasn’t coming here to school because it made her sick to look at you.”

“Oh, she did!” said Anna, smilingly.

The statement was like a slap in the face which hurts every nerve because of its suddenness. The scholars’ manner when with her had been so easy and natural that she had forgotten that they could treat her in any other way; they had been so kind that she could not suspect the need for them to hide unkindness. How she hated herself for forcing frankness, and so making them embarrassed and uncomfortable! It was almost unendurable to

know that she should be the cause of Miss Ivah losing a scholar. Her own hurt did not trouble her half so much as the knowledge that she had wilfully been the cause of discomfort to her school-mates. While she quickly thought all this, she was clearly conscious that there was only one thing to be done to lighten the misery. She must appear to take the matter carelessly, and without full understanding. She had quickly uttered the three words because she felt that she must not be silent at that moment. She looked in astonishment at all and then added,

“And Miss Ivah put her right next to me! What a pity! She was in bed when you came away, wasn’t she, Nettie?”

“I guess so. She hadn’t poked her nose in the dining-room.”

“Well, I have a dime in my pocket. I’ll buy some chocolate creams, and Nettie can take them to her from the school. If I made her sick I ought to try to make her well,” said Anna, bravely making her voice express only pleasantry.

“Give me the money. I’ll make better use of it,” said Daisy.

“You can buy the candy and I’ll eat it on the

way home. I won't save *one* for that old girl! I wish I had never seen her; I just tell you I won't speak to her again. Hotels are horrid places, anyway," said Nettie, crossly.

"That's why you are not as nice as we are; but it ain't your fault, and we love you just the same," said Daisy, soothingly.

In the afternoon requests for the privilege of whispering were noticeable, but Anna cared not if the girls had a thousand secrets. When all had started for home together, Daisy came back and put her head in the door.

"We're not such mean things after all, are we? Oh, to think of Miss Proper-Prim prying! I'll have to bring you some taffy for being so good; Emma's going to make some, and I tell you it's fine! Good-by."

While Anna waited for Janet she leaned back in her chair and mused. "Well, I hope my curiosity is dead and buried below China. I always get punished when I'm sarcastic, and untruthful, and curious. I just won't be curious and untruthful any more, but I don't see how I'm going to stop being sarcastic!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

BOOKWORMS BOTHER.

SCHOOL and scholars and teacher and lessons and the people living on the way to school were everyday matters, and therefore not so interesting, by the middle of the second term. Nothing was untried, so Anna had no difficulty in adjusting herself to people, principles and places. Her energy and thought needed additional occupation. The companionship with Clifford was at an end because he was now at school, and liked to play with the boys in the yard till dark, and demanded stories only at bedtime. It was Miss Ivah who accidentally suggested the thing needed to occupy her time by substituting "The Old Curiosity Shop" for the Franklin Reader. All of the girls were charmed with the new reading lessons until Quilp was introduced; then all except Anna declared that that thing or creature was too awful to read about, that the book was disgusting, that Dickens was horrid, and that Miss Ivah was mean

to make them begin such a nasty thing. Miss Ivah was a little astonished at this result, and Anna was amazed.

"Do get something else, Miss Ivah," entreated Daisy. "We don't want to read any more of that horrid, stupid book. Nell dies, anyway. Emma says so, and I know I'll cry when I come to that part. Dickens! I don't think he's much."

"I don't think he's anything," said Bessie.

"He is fine," asserted Anna. "I read a lot of his books last summer, and they're just—just *fine*. Of course Quilp is awful, but you needn't mind him. He can't come out of the book and be cruel to *you*."

"You just stuffed yourself with books last summer. Were they all by Dickens?" asked Nettie. "Every time we girls would go to see Anna she'd be reading, and have to shut a book and poke it in the back of her carriage."

"A lot of them were Dickens' books, but I didn't read this one. A long time ago, though, I went one day to my aunt's house, and while the children went to the store to get some candy they gave me that to read. It was a very hot day so only one shutter was open in the parlor where I was. Read-

ing about that queer old shop, and Nell being there alone at night, and thinking about my being alone in that dark room, frightened me so that I shut the book and just shivered till the children came rushing in. You see, I was too young to read that book then."

"That's it, Miss Ivah; we're too young to read it now," said Bessie, glad to find such a sensible excuse.

"I'm going to stay young forever," announced Daisy. "I don't see any sense in reading that stuff. I'm never going to be old enough to do it."

"Then we'll wait till you are in your teens and want to be out of them," said Miss Ivah, smilingly. "Anna, you may take the book home and finish it, if you like."

"Indeed, I don't want to be a young lady!" sniffed Daisy. "Silly things! I'm never going to be old if I live to be a hundred. I'm going to like everything just as much as I do now. Most old ladies are so horrid; nothing ever suits them."

"Good for you! I think you'll be a lovely old lady," applauded Anna. "Maybe you won't like pickles and peppermints so much when you're

ninety, but you'll be just as lively and funny, won't you?"

"If I get to be as wrinkled as sin and all bent over and have to walk with a crutch and cane, I ain't going to be groany and grumpy, and scold when the door is banged or ain't shut; and when anybody hunts for my specs, I shan't tell 'em that's what somebody will be doing for them some day. Anna, ain't some old grandmothers snappy?"

"I never knew but one, except those in books. I have one of my own, and she's the best in the world," said Anna proudly.

She gladly borrowed "The Old Curiosity Shop" on Friday and was proud to return it Monday. Miss Ivah was surprised.

"Have you finished it so soon? I suppose you were so interested that you read till you finished."

"Did you cry over Nell?" curiously demanded Daisy.

"Not a single bit!" said Anna triumphantly. "I shut my hands so tight that they ached, and winked so quick that I could hardly see the words, and breathed so fast that I nearly choked, but I didn't cry!"

"Have you read 'Kenilworth' by Walter

Scott?" asked Miss Ivah. "I will lend you that, if you want it."

"Oh, thank you! I've been wanting to read it. My cousin told me the other day that when they play that in the theatre they grab what's-her-name just before she falls through the trap-door. Just think of the theatre being nicer than the book!" mournfully.

"You can see it played and then pretend the book is like it," said Daisy, wishing to comfort.

"I am a Methodist," said Anna, stiffly.

"You told me that once before. Needn't think you're going to make me one!" snapped Daisy.

"The Methodist church will not allow its members to go to the theatre," politely explained Anna, though she was secretly blaming Daisy for ignorance.

"Oh, my, how funny! Our church doesn't say we shan't do anything. Can you dance?"

"No."

"What else do they say you mustn't do?"

"Play cards and go to the circus and—and wear dresses that cost a lot." Anna was not certain about the last, but she added it because Daisy's expression was becoming interesting.

"Oh, I love to play cards, only nobody will play with me because I don't play very well. Our rector went to the theatre last week ; so I suppose you will say we are bad. *Our* church minds its own business."

"Yes, your church is nothing but sticks in a garden with nothing growing on them," said Anna, hotly. "That's minding its own business too well."

Daisy did not understand figurative speech and was not feeling pugnacious just then. "Oh, bother the church ; I have enough of it on Sunday. I stay home whenever mama'll let me, and go to sleep when I'm there. I'm so glad when the sermon's over."

Now it was Anna who did not understand. She loved to go to church. After the anthem the sermon was the best part to her. She thought God was so lovely and interesting, and tried to remember all that the preachers said about Him. She was so glad He liked people to go to church, because it was such a little thing to do to please. She felt that if she confessed her liking for the church she would be considered peculiar, but loyalty forced her to say it.

"You must be good," commented Bessie, in the wondering, doubting tone Anna expected. "I never go to church. I go to Sunday-school with Daisy, and that's enough for me."

"Who wrote that book you were talking about?" asked Daisy, who thought they had talked long enough about a tiresome thing.

"Walter Scott." The question surprised Anna.

"Who's he?"

"Why, don't you—" Anna checked herself. She always tried to keep people from knowing how ignorant they were, because she did not want to be the unkind one who made them see how little they knew. "He's that Scotchman who wrote all those lovely historical books which are just like stories. You can learn a lot from them, and you don't mind the learning a bit. 'Kenilworth' tells about Queen Elizabeth and the men who wanted to marry her."

"Is she the one that goes through the trap-door?" The girls laughed and Daisy added, confusedly, "Oh, I forgot,—but Great Scott could have made it Queen Elizabeth. You can have anything you want in a book."

"But Sir Walter Scott wrote about true things."

The next day Anna returned the book, and could

not understand why Miss Ivah was still more surprised at such promptness.

“Didn’t you like it well enough to finish it?”

“Oh, yes. I studied my lessons before I went home so I could read till I finished it at nine o’clock. No, I didn’t skip. You see, I read fast. Why, I can easily read three and four books a day, but often I skip where it tells how a house is furnished and how the scenery looks. I want to get at the people and what they do; I do wish they wouldn’t put in so much about grandmothers and grandfathers who are dead long ago!”

“Do you like to read much?” asked Bessie.

“Oh, yes.” To Anna that question seemed an unnecessary one. “Only I have such a time getting enough books. My aunt gets them from the Treasury Department and my father from the War Department, and mama and Janet and papa get them from the Sunday-school. But I’ve read so many, and of course they never know which ones I have read so I seldom get a new one.”

“We have a lot of books. I can bring some here for you to take home,” said Bessie, with such pretty pleasure in the offering that Anna was charmed.

“Have you ever read ‘Betty, A Butterfly’?”

"No, but I saw it advertised and wished I could. It will be lovely in you to bother with books for me. Are you sure your mother won't mind?"

"Of course not. I'll ask her what you'll like. I'll have my school-books, so I can't bring enough for a whole day, but I'll bring some to-morrow."

As Anna waited in the school-room the next morning she thought she heard subdued giggling in the hall. Suddenly the door was flung open, and in walked Bessie, panting from the exertion of keeping her arm securely around a pile of story-books. Daisy followed and was heavily loaded with school-books and lunch-baskets.

"Did you ever see such sights as we are?" gasped Daisy. "We had to sit down on the curbstone to rest; Bessie didn't want to at first, but I told her it was fun. Who cares what people say? What will Janet say to pushing all those books home?"

"She will be so glad she won't have to go borrowing. I hope you are not very tired."

"That didn't hurt us. We didn't have to bring so many if we didn't want to," said Bessie. "I hope you'll like them all. I haven't read them, but mama has."

During the following school months it became the habit of Anna and Bessie to arrive at school with an armful of books, and depart with a pile of different ones. Bessie was the only scholar who cared to give up any play-time to reading, so the borrowing, lending and discussing were confined to Anna and the girl who was a traitor to sport. The others were often disgusted by their failure to secure attention from the two who were absorbed in grumbling at the authors, because they did not make the characters act and the books end as they wished. Miss Ivah was interested in the epidemic of reading, but had to be stern in enforcing the proper boundary. Anna went through the productions of writers for girls, and then with less relish waded through the Indian stories, war stories, hunting stories, sea stories, and the adventures of Ragged Dicks, Tattered Toms, Harrys and Williams. Her mind became so stuffed with this conglomeration that there was no room for the permanent lodgment of valuable facts and necessary knowledge.

A history lesson one day showed her that she was accepting knowledge on a false pretense. She was supposed to take it "for keeps," and instead

she held it until the teacher's back was turned and then dropped it from her grasp. When she had answered Miss Ivah's first question in the lesson of that day, she realized that she could not make a perfect recitation if it was conducted in the usual way. With an instinctive desire to avoid disgrace, she prevented the asking of another question by rattling off the whole lesson as it was printed in the book. She spoke quickly and smiled broadly so Miss Ivah did not suspect anything wrong and did not interrupt.

"Rather an unusual lesson," was the teacher's smiling comment. Anna was flushed and triumphant, and yet ashamed. She saw clearly then that it was wrong to read so much, and she acted at once.

"Don't bring me any more books, Bessie," she said immediately after school. "I have been reading too much. You know there was a boy who put so many chips into a bushel-basket that when he tried to put in some potatoes he needed, they all rolled off. I guess I'll starve if I don't keep more potatoes in my mind."

"I don't see what good it does you to read so much," said Daisy, contemptuously.

"Why, I've learned more things from story-books than from study-books."

"What on earth is there in them? Nothing but make-believe."

"What? Just lots and lots of things are in story-books! Not the way to do a sum, or analyze a sentence, or place a city, or tell what king fought where, married whom and died when, but—other things. What are some of them, Miss Ivah? I can't explain."

"Different people's way of living, what people think about many things, the names of poets and parts of their poetry, names of other good writers, the occupations of people, the scenery of many places, and many things it would be hard to explain."

"Oh, but you don't need to know those things," said Nettie, contentedly.

"Well, I shall drop school and take that easy way of learning," announced Daisy. "I'd rather read all day than go to school all day."

CHAPTER XIX.

LETTER A IN DISGRACE.

“WHY, what is the matter, Anna?” asked Miss Ivah. Anna was pale, and her lips and voice trembled as she answered:

“Papa brought me this morning, so I came in the street instead of on the pavement. Before we knew it, a red-faced man came up in a buggy behind us, and yelled and swore at us because we were in the way. Papa said he was drunk.—It wasn’t any of it *pleasant*, you know. It made papa very angry, and—I didn’t like to be the reason. I got nervous, and—when I’m nervous I want to cry. I just *won’t* do that, so this old body is making me tremble to pay for it; but it’s all right; I won’t mind in a little bit. Talk to me about something.”

It was the first time Anna had frankly appealed for help of any kind since she had been at the school. She knew that she had to choose between an appeal for aid in diverting her mind and a fit

of crying, and the former was less humiliating. She hoped she could stop the trembling in her body before the girls came. When they rushed in, they were too excited and expectant to notice her.

"Oh, Miss Ivah, aren't you scared?" asked Bessie, panting. "We're going to have a war with France!"

"Ain't it dreadful!" from Daisy. "And I have a father and three brothers!"

"My father's the captain of a ship. I guess they'll have to have boats to take everybody to France, won't they?" inquired Nettie. "I'm going to write to papa and tell him to run away with his. When he comes back, he can be so surprised we've had a war."

"I'm mighty glad I ain't got no father or brother," declared Cora.

Miss Ivah had suspected a joke because such a statement was so absurd, but at last she believed in the sincerity of the girls' fright. "What is all this excitement about?" she asked.

"Why, we're fighting with France, and just think of the people that are going to be killed! I don't see why we couldn't keep out of scrapping, and why every old country couldn't behave itself.

Miss Ivah, are you going to let us make bandages an hour every day as the children did during the Civil War?" demanded Daisy.

"Yes, you'd better, Miss Ivah, so we'll have something with which to tie up these cracked heads," said Anna. She was accustomed to reading the newspapers and so was rankly skeptical. "A war with France—the idea!"

"Well, it's a mean old idea, but it's true," asserted Bessie. She was perched on her desk and was kicking the seat of her chair as if it were the enemy. "After helping us so nicely when we were fighting England I think it was horrid in France to turn around and fight us."

Nettie suddenly took her geography from her desk and quickly turned the leaves till she found the map of Europe. Then she held a pen high above her head as she said solemnly, "I am not a boy, so they would not let me fight for my country, but a pen is mightier than the sword, and with it I shall blot France off of the face of the earth." As she spoke the last words she dropped her pen to the bottom of her ink-bottle and then let it rest on the space given to France on the map.

Anna laughed; the speech and action were so

amusing, and every one looked so shocked. "I didn't know you could think of such a lovely thing to do," said she, admiringly.

"I didn't," laughed Nettie. "Daisy said she wished she dared do it to her book. I didn't care about mine so I said I would do it, but she had to write down the speech for me. You didn't see her holding up her slate so that I could read what was on it, did you?"

Miss Ivah hastily put the corner of a blotter to the inky country so that it would absorb the black flood. "I do not see anything so lovely in the act of destroying books for such a silly reason. Do you understand, Anna? As to a war with France—I am sure there is no such thing. The newspapers would announce it, and I read this morning's paper. Where did you get that idea?"

"Oh, it's so!" persisted Daisy. "We met a boy who had just come from the War Department, and he said the people there were standing on their heads. I guess the scrap began after this morning's paper was printed."

"I think the boy was teasing you," said Miss Ivah, with a quick smile. "There is no earthly reason why we should have a war with France.

To satisfy you I will ask my father if any extras are out. He has just come in from down town." She returned in a few minutes, and could not help laughing at the expectant faces. "I am sorry to disappoint you. My father says there has been no announcement of a war. Now will you believe me?"

"Well, I'm sure I don't want to have any war!" exclaimed Bessie, and then all felt that it was permissible to go back to such every day matters as lessons and orderly conduct.

The war scare had entirely calmed Anna's agitation over the morning's adventure, but Miss Ivah's rebuke made her eyes burn and her throat smart again. She had had no intention of offending, and supposed that of course the rest would laugh with her. She resented their failure to appreciate the funny part, and thought Miss Ivah unjustly harsh. Her customary self-control had been weakened by contact with the drunken man and she hated Miss Ivah for further taxing her endurance. The smart and the shame and the nervous fear of crying, aroused angry, sullen thoughts. After being so scrupulously good for nearly two terms, it was hard to be reproved for so small a thing.

"I wish to have your undivided attention for this lesson," said Miss Ivah, as she opened a grammar book. "When we meet this new principle later I do not want you to tell me that you never knew anything about it." The principle was dissected, put together again, and numerous examples were given. Then each girl's comprehension was tested, and destroyed or strengthened according to its conformance to rule. Anna was the last one to be called to prove her understanding of the new work.

"I can't do it," she said, without looking up to see the surprised looks.

"What do you mean? Don't you understand?" pleasantly asked Miss Ivah.

"I can't do it. That's all."

"Why, it is not a bit hard. This is the rule, you know," and again it was explained. "Now see if you can't apply it."

"I can't."

"Were you attending when the others did their part?" Miss Ivah did not suspect anything but inability to understand, and the unusual density puzzled her.

"I was listening, but I can't do it."

"Then Bessie will do it again while you watch."

Any other girl would have been more endurable to Anna, because the others were only surprised at her unusual behavior. Bessie was disdainful of such ignorance, and she stepped to the board too quickly for Anna's pleasure.

"You saw then, didn't you?" asked Miss Ivah, as Bessie finished. "Now here is one for you to do. I am sure you will do it right if you try."

Anna was silent a minute, and then said stubbornly, "I saw what Bessie did, but I can't do that one."

"Try," said her teacher decidedly. "Do you know what this is?" pointing to a part of the sentence. Telling a lie in general terms was different from doing it specifically six or seven times, so Anna was forced to do what she had said she could not, because she could not make herself be untruthful so many times at once. "I thought it was only timidity," said Miss Ivah, with a smile of triumph. She was glad she had been successful in helping the scholar who so seldom failed. "Now try that one by yourself."

"I can't do it." The open sullenness in the tone made Miss Ivah instantly grave. She looked

at Anna a minute and then said, with some displeasure,

“Why, Anna?”

The bewildered girls were not more silent than Anna.

“I spoke to you, Anna.”

Anna closed her grammar, poked it in her desk and leaned back in her chair. “Because I don’t feel like it,” she said, indifferently.

“Have you a headache?”

“No.”

“Are you ill in any way?”

“I don’t feel sick.” Nevertheless she longed to get in bed and cry herself to sleep and wake up in the morning without anything to trouble her. She thought it was a mistake for her to come to school and try to be like other girls; right near her mother was the best place for an invalid. Her mother knew when a thing was funny and always laughed at it, too.

“Then I do not see why you cannot do this as well as the rest of the girls. You must—”

“I can’t do it, and it’s just because I *won’t*,” said Anna, fiercely. “I’m sick and tired of the old thing and I’m not going to do it now.” She

knew that she was then past the danger of crying and the rest did not matter. She could have given in and cried, but would not do that ; it was ever so much better to be bad, than to be a baby. Who cared for the effect on the other scholars? They need not expect to go to Heaven on her goodness.

“I must keep you in for half an hour after school. We will talk about the lesson then,” said Miss Ivah, for she could no longer mistake the ugliness of Anna’s manner.

Nettie and Bessie could not help grinning at Anna because the punishment was an every-day occurrence which would have been endured even if there had been no misbehavior. Anna grinned back, but the fact that she would have stayed in any event was no satisfaction to her. The disgrace was horrible, and she mourned over the break in her good record. When school closed her passion was entirely gone, but she was writhing under shame of another kind. She had lowered herself and given trouble to the teacher who had been so kind ! Extenuating circumstances could not alter that fact.

“Well, Anna, what excuse have you to offer for your disrespectful conduct this morning?” asked

Miss Ivah, as she stood looking kindly at the downcast face before her. She tried hard to be properly offended but could only wonder what had changed the scholar on whom she depended so much.

"There is nothing to excuse it," said Anna, very low. Then she looked up. "Oh, Miss Ivah, wasn't I just perfectly *horrid*? I felt like I was somebody else at first, but after I got started I *liked* to be nasty and mean." After that confession she expected a much worse punishment.

Miss Ivah almost smiled. "Why did you start?"

Anna hesitated. "You wouldn't laugh, and I got angry. I wouldn't have inked my book for *anything*. But I don't see why that made me so horrid."

"I was very much surprised. Of course I must have obedience and respect from my scholars." Anna thought Miss Ivah's dignity was so pretty. "You have always helped me so much. May I still depend on you?"

"Oh, yes, if you can. If I start to be bad again I'll stop right away." Anna could not make herself say any more, but her eyes were expressive.

"Then we will say nothing more about it."

Anna drummed on her desk for ten minutes and then stopped with a loud thump as she finished reasoning. "I just hate myself for acting like that, but it wasn't all bad that came of it," she thought. "Miss Ivah won't act as if I couldn't be bad if I wanted to, and the girls saw that I was bad, so they won't think I'm too good to be nice. I've had a fling and now I suppose I'll just have to hug my old influence and go just where ever it pulls. Oh, dear me, what a world this is!"

CHAPTER XX.

EASTER MONDAY.

THE days and weeks went on, and Anna resolutely refrained from inciting or encouraging lawlessness in the school. Sometimes she found goodness very dull and longed to see the others become fractious, but there was compensation in seeing Miss Ivah's happiness because of such good behavior. Then anticipation helped, for Mr. Roderick had begged the privilege of taking Miss Ivah's scholars to the annual egg-rolling in the grounds of the White House on Easter Monday. He grumbled long and loud because the Government did not grant play and pay to the big children on that day as it did many other times, and then sighed as he condescended to take one of his thirty days' annual leave that he might keep his engagement with his daughter and her friends.

Anna laughed at his sorrow. "The biggest pigs in the world are penned up in Washington! Did you know that, papa? Uncle Sam's clerks

want to gobble up everything and never say thank you !” she declared, saucily.

“Listen to that !” said Mr. Roderick reproachfully, but wrinkles of amusement were around his eyes. “I shall take a newspaper and a basket of provisions, and listen to secrets all day. You must take care of the children ; I’ll rescue them from any danger you see, but I can’t manage that tribe.”

Like the rest of the children in the city, the girls spent much time discussing dyes and the different ways of decorating eggs. Calico scraps with pretty designs and flowers were dragged from garret and cellar, to be treasured and traded. New shades of home manufacture were freely advertised and samples given. Small fancy baskets were a necessity of life ; a bow of ribbon on the handle the coveted superfluity. The possessor of one dozen eggs just escaped the imputation of poverty ; two dozen was the average number ; two dozen and a half was desirable ; three dozen was riches that taxed the endurance of arms and digestive organs ; three dozen and a half was vulgar vanity that met cold looks and open scorn. The sun was so much talked about right before his face, and the rain was so

much backbitten, that it was surprising the first did not stay in bed and sulk, and the other deluge the city on the gala day; but never before had there been a fairer day for egg-rolling.

"It's a day baked blue and yellow," growled Daisy, as the seven went slowly down Vermont Avenue. She jerked the brim of her hat down over her eyes to shade them from the sun. "You're nice to come out, but you shan't put my eyes out."

"Did you ever see such blue sky and such yellow sunshine?" happily supplemented Anna. "Oh, there's Martin Luther! Don't you wish we could take him along?"

"What do we want with boys?" sniffed Daisy. "They'd grab all our eggs and break 'em just so they could eat 'em." There was a sudden shout of laughter and Daisy and Nettie looked bewildered. Cora hastily put herself and her eggs on a stone carriage step and rocked to and fro as she mumbled,

"He'd have a hard time breakin' 'em unless you threw 'em against him."

"I meant *Martin Luther*, the statue over there,—not a boy I know," said Anna in a matter-of-fact way. She had a way of explaining mistakes so that no one's pride was hurt.

“Who’s Martin Luther, anyway?” asked Daisy. “I just bet none of you knew, if you did laugh.”

“I know he has been standin’ up in front of the Lutheran Memorial Church all my life, but I don’t know what he was before he turned to stone,” confessed Cora.

“Didn’t he tack up signs on church doors, and live on worms?” Bessie stopped to laugh at her tangled thoughts. “Well, anyway, it was something like that.”

Anna did not care to tug at that tangle. “Why, he is the man who started religion,” she said.

“Anna Roderick! My Sunday-school teacher says the Saviour did that!” said Daisy, quickly, as she put on a shocked expression.

Anna winced at the careless irreverence, but she did not see how she could make the girls realize its wrong so she only smiled and shook her head at Daisy; then she gazed with delight at Thomas Circle which was gay with beds of tulips and hyacinths. As the girls paused to revel in the color Daisy shook her fist at the statue of General Thomas and his horse.

“Mean old thing! That’s for helping at Chickamauga! I don’t care, Anna Roderick! *He* don’t

have to get out of a nigger's way. Here comes one of 'em now. Watch!" Naughty Daisy turned her head to examine the warrior as she walked, and purposely charged into two stylishly dressed mulatto women who stubbornly pushed straight on and loudly declared their equality with any white trash. Daisy giggled at this exhibition of independence, and the rest of the way she was aggressively observant of the colored population.

Pennsylvania Avenue and the cross-streets were crowded with children, eggs and chaperons. Mr. Roderick turned Anna's chair down Executive Avenue by the left of the White House, but Daisy walked on, calling out,

"I'll meet you in a minute. The President's a mean old thing to ask you to a party in his backyard. I'm going in the front way, anyway."

The others watched and laughed as she marched firmly through the gate by the front driveway, along the path a little distance from the building, down the steps to the fountain, up the opposite steps and on to the merry, busy children on the small hills between the White House and the White Lot. The curb was lined with two-wheeled carts guarded by the sons of Africa and Italy. Bananas, figs, dates,

oranges, lemons, peanuts, popcorn, gorgeous jewelry and hunks of taffy aroused the covetousness of children and the vexation of improvident and impoverished guardians. Balloons, penny-wheels and paper flowers seemed to go about by themselves, but the owners promptly emerged from their midst when custom was still afar off. Mr. Roderick at once sighted the best place for his party and serenely, but determinedly, fought and begged his way to it. Anna protested, but only feebly, for she knew her father's persistence in that way. At the top of the highest slope they settled themselves, and while the others unpacked their eggs Anna eagerly looked around.

Above was the pale blue of the sky ; underneath the fresh green of the trampled grass ; to the north the White House and conservatories which hid from the curious the actions and occupations of the President, his family, his servants and his clerks ; to the south, what seemed like a tall line of white marble, the monument that holds up the memory of Washington above all others ; to the southwest the picturesque Potomac River ; to the west a large gray building, the State, War and Navy Department, where employees of the Government manage the

business of war and its consequences, regulate the national policy and govern the ships upon the sea ; to the west the Treasury Building, which had once been white, and where the American money is perfected and stored, the mutilated exchanged for good and the worn-out banknotes ground up to pulp ; everywhere the pushing, happy crowd of black and white children, and over all the warm sunlight. Anna's eyes viewed carefully the form and coloring of all this and her mind quickly supplemented the use and work of the buildings. At the edge of the slope was the empty band-stand where later would be stationed the Marine Band which is specially detailed for the use of the President. During the half-hour for luncheon the clerks of nearby government departments and private offices would hurry to the ground to observe the scene and get in the way of the children. Cameras were almost as plentiful as eggs.

"Funny what becomes of all the pictures," said Mr. Roderick. "All of the people who come here can't be from other cities. Yesterday I went to every photographic supply store in the city and found only two views of the ground and people. I had told a man that I would get him all he wanted."

“Let’s pick eggs before we roll them,” said Daisy.
“Anna, I know I’ll clean you out.”

Anna opened her mouth to exclaim, but slowly closed it. It was a shock to see her friends eagerly preparing for what she abhorred as a kind of gambling. She had just cautioned Clifford not to pick “for keeps,” but she refrained from extending her mission work, because she knew that it would be useless.

“Come on, Anna ; you first,” said Daisy, with an air of importance.

“I don’t do it ‘for keeps,’” said Anna, as she held up her toughest egg. “You see I—” She could not finish her explanation, for Mr. Roderick, who had quickly challenged Nettie, sighed over his smashed egg and paid his debt from Anna’s basket. “Why, papa !” she cried.

“She got me that time,” he said, ruefully, and without an idea of the true reason of her exclamation. “We’ll have to try it again. Find me a hard one ; just knock them on your teeth and then you can tell.”

It was not the first time that Anna had discovered her father to be short of her mother’s high mark. She saw he did not guess what was in her mind, so

she quietly obeyed; but she would not herself pick eggs.

"I want some taffy," announced Daisy. "Here's a nickel, Cora; you're thin, so you can get through the crowd easier."

"You're not going to eat that on the carts!" exclaimed Anna, horrified.

"Of course not; it'll be in my mouth when I eat it," snapped Daisy. "You get a whole lot of that for a nickel," she condescended to explain.

"Yes, because half of it's dirt." Anna's disgust was amusing to the rest.

"I don't care, if I don't see it. They dust it off with a feather duster before they give it to you," said Bessie, giggling.

Sticky fingers and eggs that would lodge in hollows were the thorns in the happiness of the next hour. Simply rolling the eggs down an incline was as exciting and dangerous as coasting down Franklin Hill after a snowfall. Each girl took an egg from her basket, watched for an opening in the crowd, and at a signal from Anna gave the egg a gentle push to start it rolling. Eagerly and silently they watched the trip down; some eggs would creep along until a thick bunch of grass or



THE EGG-ROLLING ON THE WHITE HOUSE LAWN.

a stone would turn them aside and send them on faster; others would gain a rapid start and be abruptly stopped by a tiny hollow; still others would have a trying mixture of smooth rolls and narrow escapes from stoppage. The egg that first reached the bottom brought fame to its owner and was laid aside to escape destruction till the last. When every egg was perfectly still or perfectly smashed, there was a wild scramble down the hill to recapture sound property. Then back to the top the girls would go and the game and fun would begin over again. It was a simple game and hardly to be appreciated unless played or watched. The uncertainty and variety of the egg journeying was the chief attraction. There were no vehicles or cars to meet as when coasting down Franklin Hill, but at any moment a careless passer-by might step on a slippery object, turn an ankle, frown at an innocent observer and hurriedly limp away. Each treasure must be reclaimed, and as the girls were compelled to walk quickly with their eyes on the ground, there were frequent collisions of bodies and tempers. Anna enjoyed the novelty of sitting on the ground with her back against a tree and watching the others take liberties with

her wheel-chair. When the usual egg-rolling play seemed to pall, she invented new games which called for skill of hand, quickness of thought and speed of feet. In the last Nettie should not have tried to excel. Everywhere the grass had been trodden smooth, and as she ran once and shoved Mattie back, she rolled down the hill into a slippery, slimy mess of raw eggs ; there she struggled helplessly and tried to scramble to her feet.

“ It’s scrambled eggs with a big bad egg in the middle !” shrieked Bessie, as she, too, sat helpless on the ground. The nearby small boys jeered and the older folks did not try to hide their amusement, so Nettie distributed scowls as she got up and shook her skirt.

“ Where will I get some water ?” she groaned. “ I’d rather be soaked than be sticky.”

“ We’ll look everywhere till we find a watchman,” said Daisy. “ All of you grab up bags as you come ; she’ll need some washrags, and paper’s better than nothing.”

Mr. Roderick was snoring in the shade, so Anna had no one to talk to and amused herself by knocking the eggs about as far as she could reach. As she had half expected every minute, one of them ran away.

"Oh, dear!" she said, involuntarily.

"I'll find it for you," said a sweet little voice. Anna turned to see a girl of about five years who captured the egg and carefully put it in the basket; then she took hold of Anna's hand and looked pleadingly in her face.

"Now please find my mother for me," she said, simply.

Her simple confidence aroused all the tenderness there was in Anna. She longed to kiss the pretty face, although it was swollen and dirty from crying.

"Of course I will," she said in a comforting tone that relaxed the strain on the child. "That is—I can't do it myself, but I'll ask my friends to. You see I can't walk. I ride about in that chair."

The child looked from the chair to Anna's face. "Does it make you cry?" she asked pityingly.

Anna caught her breath, but she answered brightly,

"Oh, no; I have nice times. I could come here, you see. Crying makes other people feel badly," she added, to see what the child would say.

"That's why I cry—sometimes," she confessed, shamefacedly.

Anna hid her laughter and then straightened her

face as she rummaged in the big basket for the cake.

“Eat this while you’re waiting.”

The child’s hands went quickly behind her. “I mustn’t. Please hide it.”

“Why not?—why?” asked Anna, surprised.

“I’ve had three bananas, two apples,—two oranges,—some peanuts—and popcorn and eggs and my lunch, and mama says I can’t hold another thing. Why didn’t God make stomachs big enough?”

“I don’t know,” Anna managed to say soberly just as the other girls came back, and then she explained to them. “Take her to the Lost House and stay with her a little while, can’t you? Maybe her mother will be there soon.”

“How can you take her if the house is lost?” asked Mattie, and the girls clapped at such unusual wit in her. They felt very important as they walked off trying to soothe the troubled little one; they had the vague wish that they might tie a placard on her back so that all they met might know that they were aiding one of the unfortunates for whom the government makes special provision on Easter Monday. Anna was surprised to see them return in a very short time with a balloon floating on a level with each head, and an extra one in Nettie’s hand.

"Her mother's hugging her now," said Bessie. "It's a Hug and Kiss House instead of a Bureau for Lost Children. It makes you sick and tired to look in there."

"The man said that little girl was the sixty-first child. I guess if I was a mother I could hold on to my own children," said Daisy, scornfully.

"What *will* you do with balloons?" asked Anna, who was a little ashamed that her friends should be seen with such childish toys.

"Just whatever you say to do with 'em. They're as good as eggs," said Cora.

Anna shook her head, but finally yielded to pressure. "Well, then—Nettie, pretend that yours is China, and you're a Chinaman inside; Cora's is Italy and she's an Italian; Daisy's is Africa and she's an African; Mattie's is France and she's a Frenchman; Bessie's is Germany and she's a German; mine is Mexico and I'm a Mexican. Sit down in a circle—that's it. Now we'll pass the balloons round and round, and we'll each rub our fingers over them while we count ten. You see we want to find out which country will—"

"Bust up first," finished Cora. "Come on girls; that's fine!"

For ten minutes it seemed that every country was to continue sound and stable. The balloons passed from hand to hand, were lightly squeezed, and still remained firm and round. Then Mattie carelessly pressed harder, her fingers went through the thin rubber, and she jumped as China wilted under her fingers. By that time the unusual proceeding had attracted the attention of more than a few of the curious ; embarrassed and resentful the girls pressed harder, and suddenly Italy, Mexico and France succumbed to force. At that moment the observers and every one near and most of the crowd on the ground forgot their eggs and friends and hurried toward the Executive Mansion.

“Move along with the rest ; the President must be on show,” said Mr. Roderick.

As Daisy and Bessie jumped to their feet they dropped the strings attached to their balloons and Africa and Germany went rapidly toward the sky.

“*Oh!*—well, anybody knows Africa would have lasted longer than Germany,” was Daisy’s calm announcement, and for once Bessie did not dispute such an outrageous claim. “Anna, don’t you want to go to see the President?”

“No ; I don’t care about him.”

“He’s the loveliest man living, and he’s a Democrat,” said Daisy, indignantly. “I guess he can live if you don’t look at him. I hope he will see me ; wouldn’t it be nice if he should ask me up on the porch ? I think he ought to because I stand up for him every time.”

In front of the broad balcony at the back of the Executive Mansion the crowd was packed tightly. Some of the people had given up the pleasure of egg-rolling that they might keep a place where they would be sure to see the President closely ; for two and three hours they had stared at the White House windows and gossiped with strangers and waited. They looked longingly at the two winding gray stone stairways at each end of the balcony ; but two policemen kept them back from the coveted vantage ground by the mere shake of the head and a regretful smile. Underneath the steps they might go and so along the path by the basement to the public toilet-room for the necessary drink of water, but down on the ground they must stay. Daisy and Nettie dug into people’s sides and backs and at last made their way through the tired watchers and up to the iron fence by the steps. There they found that the rush had been caused by the

officials of the house placing chairs on the balcony. In the centre was a tall-backed chair from the Blue Room ; the light blue brocade of the seat and back and the gold frame were lit up by the sunshine as it waited for the mistress of the house.

“ You’re mighty stingy with your old steps ! ” remarked Daisy to the policeman.

He grinned. “ You ought to be satisfied with what you’ve got. Ain’t many folks would spoil their yard just at grass-growing time for a pack of black and white strange kids. ’Spose you all think this is a mighty fine picnic. ’Tain’t nothing to the one there’ll be to-morrow ; you ought to be here then.”

“ Nice looking place it will be,” sniffed Daisy. “ Wouldn’t come if I was invited.”

“ Well, the robins ain’t likely to ask you to,” laughed the man. “ There’s about fifteen or twenty of them that live here in the summer, and this evening they’ll find out a thing or two. They’ll send out invitations, and to-morrow, before the gardeners can get the ground cleaned, there’ll be a hundred and fifty or more robins eating hard-boiled eggs. The sparrows won’t have a chance except at the pieces of bread on the edge of the ground. That’s the way it was last year.”

"Oh, I'd love to see it!" exclaimed Daisy.

"Oh, I wish—" said Bessie, and then she paused. "I wish the President liked me," she finished, and they laughed together at the absurdness and futility of the wish.

Down below the slope the band-stand was gay with the uniforms and the instruments of the Marine Band. The popular and patriotic airs and the hand-clapping had been heard for the last half hour. Suddenly the band began to play "Hail to the Chief," and out on the balcony came the President and his family. They seated themselves where they might view the shifting crowd and in turn submitted to minute inspection. Hats and handkerchiefs waved wildly in the air, and then suddenly and without ostensible plan or signal every hand clapped vigorously. The most merciless pushing and shoving of the day came next. Colored and white, old and young and poor and proud crowded forward to see the Chief Executive bow and smile his thanks. It was the small boy's chance to see the man who occupied the shoes for which he waited; in the small girl's mind there was deeply printed a copy of the manners requisite in "the first lady of the land." After that the crowd

was not so thick ; egg-rolling in itself was entirely satisfactory until it was interrupted by the appearance of the fortunate, favored family which attracted interest from every one ; after the egg-rollers had seen the President watch the egg-rolling, the sport which had seemed so engrossing before suddenly became flat and unprofitable. As the sun sank lower the tired and satisfied children turned away from the pleasure which had been anticipated all during the year. At five o'clock the gates were closed on grounds which looked like nothing but a dumping-place.

"That's a nice looking back yard for a president to have. There ain't a blade of grass left, but there are cartloads and loads more of egg-shells and paper bags to scrape off," said Daisy.

CHAPTER XXI.

FORD'S THEATRE.

ONCE more the last day of school came with rest for the weary and pain in the parting. The constant heat of May had taxed the energy of every one ; lessons had been mastered by dogged persistence, but no one cared to exert themselves to prepare anything extra for entertainment. The school room was beautifully decked with roses, and made comforting because of a great pitcher of ice-water ; for an hour or more the girls enjoyed free speech. Then Miss Ivah took out her watch and smiled.

“ Now we will have recess,” she said. “ A little longer one than usual—about two thousand four hundred and forty-four hours.”

There was a blank silence ; then Anna laughed and after a moment the rest hissed.

“ Oh, *Miss Ivah* ! You made us work our minds after school,” lamented Bessie.

“ You’ve got to pay us for that !” asserted Daisy.

"One rose apiece ; here Anna, you hold them. We will take you home, so you can carry them all."

Miss Ivah added good measure and then waved a last good-by as the girls carefully closed the gate behind them. As they reached the corner of P Street an ambulance hurried by with clanging bell ; the white of the stretcher and the black clothes of a man seemed jumbled together as the girls looked for an instant. Another bell tapped quickly, and the police patrol-wagon drove past with reckless speed. The policemen were standing on the back step ; every seat was occupied by men with bloody, bandaged heads and limp arms.

"There must have been a free fight down town !" cried Cora. "Come on, girls, let's see what it is."

Six eager hands grabbed Anna's chair, and she found herself going quickly over the ground with six feet flying out behind. Bessie and Mattie puffed and panted as they tried to keep up. All were trembling with excitement, wildly curious to see something awful, and yet dreading what the next square might reveal. As they went further down town they were joined by other people, who questioned each other as they ran. The girls began to

believe the world was topsy-turvy, as every passing carriage held a bandaged head, and ambulances dashed through the crowd with sickening frequency; crossing the streets was becoming difficult.

"What is the matter?" Cora asked of a racing wheelman.

"Building fell down on a lot of people!" he yelled back.

The girls turned pale, but kept on to New York Avenue. From the first Anna had doubted the wisdom of her going, but she did not wish to keep back the others; now she was sure that it was not right for any of them to be in the midst of such an excited crowd.

"It's the War Department! and hundreds of clerks are killed!" cried a frantic woman as she pushed her way through the crowd. "Oh, *my husband* is there!"

"Serves the Government right; that building was condemned long ago!" growled a man who was not actively concerned about any one and so had time to grumble. "Somebody will pay for that."

Anna's hands shook and she dropped them from

the arms of her chair and folded them tightly in her lap; something seemed to cover the sun and then drop slowly down toward her. She tried to tell the girls that they must go home—that their mothers—

“Is that your sister?” demanded a withered old woman as she paused and looked accusingly at the girls. “Well, this ain’t no place for her, whoever she is. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves for bringing her here. If you was set to mind her I guess it wouldn’t of killed you to miss all this trouble and blood.”

Nettie was ready with all the impertinence needed, when Anna managed to rouse herself and say indignantly,

“Why, I wanted to come, and they’re always just as good to me as can be!” Then she shivered. “But we—didn’t know—what it was,” she added, and her voice quivered, while again the street looked dark.

“Well, you’d better go right home and thank the Lord you ain’t got no one that’s been murdered down there.”

“Why, Anna, your father’s in the Gover’nment, ain’t he?” asked Cora, with the thoughtless desire

to be connected with the excitement of a narrow escape.

"What office?" sharply asked the woman, as she noticed Anna's pallid face.

Anna looked up helplessly. "The War Department," she said slowly, and dug her finger-nails into her palms till the pain was sickening.

"*Oh, Lord!*" The woman staggered back. Then her curiosity conquered caution. "Have you got a mother?" she asked.

Anna's lip quivered as she nodded. The thought of her mother and of home almost shattered her self-control; she was drawing the first long breath to be spent in a sob, when she glanced at the girls; they stood around her stiff from fear, with not a bit of color in their faces. Anna stopped the breath when it was half-way up her throat, and made an effort to relieve their minds.

"Don't worry about me; maybe—" She was interrupted by the loud sobbing of a woman just behind.

"No, I'm not crying 'cause anything's the matter, but because there *ain't* anything," said the woman to the sympathizing neighbors. "I come all the way from Mount Pleasant without any hat expecting to

see my dead husband. You see, they rushed in and yelled the War Department at me, and I didn't wait for any more. We ain't been married but a month, and he got transferred from the Gover'ment Printin' Office so he could git more pay and git married, and the thought of that nearly set me crazy as I come down." There was a murmur of sympathy from the crowd, and she smiled happily on them all. "But, you see, my husband's in with the *State, War and Navy*,—that other building's just a branch of the War part."

"*Oh!*" cried Anna. She began to laugh and cry at once. "Oh, girls—" Now that there was no necessity for self-restraint she could not keep herself from trembling violently. "Papa's all right. He isn't in any branch—"

"Oh, land! All that fuss for nothing," said the old woman, with an ignorant person's disappointment at being defrauded of a scene.

Daisy promptly shoved Anna's wheel-chair over the stranger's foot which she hoped was filled with corns, Bessie begged a mock pardon very prettily, and then the girls hurried on to a safe laughing place.

"As long as your father's all right we can laugh,"

said Cora, apologetically, when she had calmed herself. "We just couldn't help doing that. Oh, but didn't she look mad!"

Anna smiled mechanically as she wiped off her tears. She felt as if she had been put into a bag with rocks and then rolled down a hill; and she dreaded to go home before she was more composed.

"If I'd only noticed that everybody is rushing down Tenth Street and not toward the White House!" she sighed. "Papa's building is next to that, and the other one is Ford's Theatre, four or five squares from here. No, of course they don't have government clerks there in the daytime and actors at night; I meant it used to be Ford's Theatre—where Lincoln was shot."

"Ain't old Abe a grand fellow?" said Daisy, admiringly. "George W. ain't in it with him. I tell you what let's do. Everybody thinks we're at school; so let's go to Lafayette Park and have a good time. Anybody got any money?"

Six cents was the amount extorted. Anna was glad of any diversion and cheerfully gave her last nickel.

"We'll have to get stick candy, because Anna won't eat dirt and we can't get much of any other

kind for five cents," mourned Bessie. "So as long as we do what she wants, she must do as we want and tell us all about Lincoln. Tell it right, but make a fine story out of it; we don't want any history now."

As they passed the Treasury Building on their way to the park, a group of strangers were gazing at the stained, smoky-looking stone. Daisy guided the wheel-chair close to them and winked at the girls as she said to Anna,

"They're going to whitewash it next week. Aren't you glad? I've been so ashamed of the old place."

"I should think they would have done it long ago," said Mattie, gravely, but the visitors looked scandalized and indignant.

"Well, I didn't know the Government was as stingy as—" were the scornful words which came to the expectant girls. They grinned broadly and dazed Mattie with unmerciful pats of approval.

"It's a shame to poke Lafayette on the corner and have old Andrew Jackson in the middle," said Bessie, as they entered the park at the side of the statue.

"Well, Andy was there first with his canons

around him, and do you think anybody'd want to be blown up to get him away?" asked Daisy.

"Well, I wish I knew what those figures mean," sighed Anna, as she gazed at the one figure up high and then at those below.

"They're just some poor children Lafayette brought over to our free land, and he was so wild to fight for us that he forgot to bring their trunk," said Nettie. That was brilliancy from her, and all applauded as they laughed and looked at the naked, dimpled children; it seemed to be a relief to be silly after encountering the horrifying accident. They settled themselves comfortably on seats, and tried to forget what they had seen and what they had imagined.

"I'll tell what you want if you won't interrupt me once," began Anna, and all promised. "Once there was a man who wanted to do something to put some friends in a good humor, so he bought them tickets to the theatre and said he would go there with them; but the people sent word that they wouldn't be seen with him. Well, the man said he knew that a lot of people would go there to see him, anyway, and he wouldn't disappoint them, so he went. I don't know whether he was sorry he went

or whether he was glad, because he never had time to tell any one."

Nettie was impatient. "What's that got—"

Anna looked severe and Nettie subsided. "Some powder and smoke came against the man's shoulder, I think, and they had to carry him out and across the street to a little brick house, and he died there." She paused a moment and then added rapidly, "The theatre was Ford's, the man Abraham Lincoln, and the house was 516 Tenth Street, and, if you own a quarter, you can go in there and see three thousand leavings of Lincoln."

Before Anna had finished, every girl had put her fingers into her ears, but still not far enough in to keep out sound; their disgust at such trifling was too strong for words.

"I couldn't help it," said Anna, openly depressed. "I couldn't put on airs and think about a story while all—that—is going on."

"Oh, hush!" said Cora, hastily. "Let's talk about something else. Say, don't you guess that all the people in the houses around here feel mighty big because they live right opposite the President?"

"Of course they do; as big as the Washington

Monument," said Bessie. "Who do you s'pose they are?"

"I can tell you who did live in some of them," said Anna, listlessly. "Daniel Webster lived over there before Mr. Corcoran did; Commodore Decatur built the one 'way across, and Henry Clay lived there afterward; ex-President Madison built one; Robert Ingersoll lived two doors below—he's the man who doesn't believe in the Bible; in another one, Secretary Seward lived when they stabbed him the night they shot Lincoln; and—"

"Oh, bother!" said Bessie.

"Hush up talking about dead people!" cried Daisy. "I don't know 'em all, anyway; I have never heard of some of 'em. Let's go home. There ain't any use in our trying to have fun now, we will just go on thinking about houses falling down on people."

They were very silent as they walked slowly home with sober faces and thoughts intent on the wounded people they had seen, and for weeks they could not get away from the tragedy which had stirred the city; yet what they knew and understood was not one-third of the awful crash and consequences.

CHAPTER XXII.

LETTER D'S GARDEN-PARTY.

“WHAT dress shall I wear?” asked Anna, trying to appear calm and unconcerned. This was to be her first garden-party but she did not want her excitement to remind her family of the fact, for if they saw that she cared so much they would be sorry that she had not been to others.

“Your new lawn dress ; you look well in that. I’m glad I decided to make it before I made Janet’s,” said Mrs. Roderick.

This was disappointing to Anna ; she thought a minute. “Yes, I’m glad, too,” she said hesitatingly ; “but don’t you s’pose they will all dress in white ? I was wondering if I couldn’t—How would it do to wear that white dress of Janet’s ? That one you made over for me—the thick white goods ? It’s right cool this evening, and I won’t be moving about, you know.”

“Oh, you mean my first party dress,” said
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Janet. "I wore that to the Christmas party, and the minister's son managed to catch me under the mistletoe. It was his party, too. You wouldn't think a minister's son would—"

"Now you know you wouldn't think exactly that; ministers' sons are always the worst boys," asserted Anna. "But you ought to be thankful to him, for he made you remember about mistletoe after that; I'm so glad you are not silly enough to like being caught under the mistletoe. Mama, do you think it would be all right to wear that dress?"

"Certainly, if you would rather do so; I had forgotten about it. You have not worn it yet, have you?" Janet had outgrown the dress, and Anna had begged that it be made over for her though she did not know that she should ever have a good chance to wear it.

After dinner, Anna waited in the front yard till Janet was ready to take her to Daisy's garden where the guests were to gather at seven o'clock. Anna carefully read the newspaper which she then considered tiresome, watched the slow-moving hands of her watch, shivered in anticipation of another meeting with Mrs. Joy and thought again

and again that it was perfectly lovely in Daisy to ask her to the garden-party. She knew that Janet did not like to be hurried and yet, at six-thirty, she ventured to call out the time.

"Oh, I'll be ready in half an hour," cheerfully responded Janet, as she came to the window with a curling-iron held close to her head.

"But it begins at seven!" cried Anna, dismayed.

"Gracious! it isn't an entertainment. We can get there in fifteen minutes. That will be a polite time. They won't close the doors at a certain hour," remonstrated Janet a little surprised and vexed to find that, for once, Anna did not readily agree with her opinion.

"Oh, you hurry. I don't care about being fashionable," said Anna, but she philosophically resigned herself to the loss of some precious minutes. In five minutes, however, when Janet came down flushed and a little disapproving, Anna thought her the sweetest, prettiest and nicest motive power that could be hired for love or money. She had on the gown which Anna liked best. She had thought of asking her to put it on but she did not want to make her pretty sister self-conscious in the pres-

ence of the Joy family. As they went rather hurriedly along the street, Anna delighted in watching every one who passed and looked with various degrees of interest at her sister.

"We're a square away from Daisy's and fifteen minutes away from the time," remarked Janet, as she paused at the street corner. "Do you want to go in now?" There was mingled laughter and vexation in her tone.

Anna was appalled at the result of her impatience. She thought feverishly that she would rather go home than present herself at the party before the hour set; it would look as if she were so anxious, and Daisy might not be dressed, and—why, they might send those boys to entertain her! "Can't we walk around the square first?" she asked meekly. "Go real slow, and then I guess—I suppose your watch is going?"

Janet laughed. "You can't blame it on my watch; it is exactly with yours. Isn't it better to be fashionable than unwelcome?"

"I wish I was an hour late," groaned Anna. "Janet!—do you call this going slow?"

Janet laughed again. "I forgot. You see, I keep thinking you want me to hurry." She could

not refrain from grumbling in a teasing way as she walked along with enforced slowness. "Well, we've been around the square, and this is Daisy's house. Don't look at your watch, and then you won't know the time."

"Don't open the gate!" hurriedly entreated Anna. "Go down that street over there, quick! You can get across before the car comes. Yes, that is what I said. Down that street, quick!" Anna half wondered why Janet so promptly obeyed; it was such an unreasonable request from a notably reasonable person, but she knew she had to be mysterious or Janet would argue against what she determined to do. Across the car track and down the street they went; when they could no longer see a gray house standing within a pretty yard, Anna said shamefacedly, "I don't believe it took us two minutes to go around that square!"

Janet did not understand. "What is the matter with you? I don't see any one. I thought I'd better do what you said or I didn't know what would happen to us."

"Oh, there wasn't anybody calling. You see—"

"I don't."

"I was afraid one of the Joys would see us," explained Anna, hysterically. She made herself stop laughing and went on. "While I was asking you to go around two or three times more and you were telling me it would be all right to go in then, they might have looked out. I *can't* go in before seven."

There was silence while Anna anxiously waited to see if Janet possessed enough humor to make her worthy of the name of Roderick.

"Well, if you aren't the craziest thing!" burst from the pretty, red lips of Janet, as she stood perfectly still and supported herself on the back of the wheel-chair. Anna was relieved. That was Janet's everyday comment on some action or word of Anna's, so she was not angry enough to invent a new and more crushing phrase.

"Crazy as can be," assented Anna. "But I feel easy away from that house. I think you'd do fine in a fire; the way you minded me was great!"

If Janet did not laugh as often as the other Rodericks, any one would be willing to wait for the musical sound which came at last. Anna heard it with satisfaction and responded with what Janet called "a little grunt." It was her only audible expression of her amusement.

"I'll leave you and then go to see Bess Bolter," said Janet, as she at last opened the shunned gate. "What time shall I come for you?"

"I don't know. Oh, Janet! they might ask you to stay; and if they do, why you—just stay, do you hear?"

"Oh, that wouldn't be—"

"Yes it would, if they ask. Well, you can say no at first, and if they ask again—that'll be all right. I want you to see them all."

"Go right around that side. You'll see Daisy," called a man from the third floor of the house. Again the Roderick humor asserted itself at this prompt and applicable supplement to their words.

"He was too far up to hear us, but wasn't it funny?" mumbled Anna. "I suppose that's Mr. Joy. Oh, mercy! there's a boy on the ant porch! Do you think he could have heard? It's Lowry; you knew him at Miss Clara's, so I won't have to introduce you. I will? Oh, I shall die while I'm doing it!" Properly but awkwardly she pronounced the words of introduction; and though she lived, she felt dazed while the young gentleman took Janet's place at the back of her chair and tried to be at ease with the young lady who was

older, but not a bit taller than himself. Daisy met them in front of Daniel Webster's home. Her dress was an extremely simple pink lawn almost devoid of trimming; Anna glanced uneasily at her own fancy dress and wished she had worn the one her mother had suggested.

"Somebody told me they saw you go by before, and I rushed out, but couldn't see a thing of you," was Daisy's greeting. That was worse than if it were necessary to make another introduction.

"Yes,—why, I didn't see you. We did go by and—and went down the street—we had to see some—" stammered Anna, desperately, and then she saw Janet's disapproval of the untruth she had not meant to tell. "I was so early—I didn't know—so we went on a little way. I didn't see you."

"I was in the side yard fixing up the lanterns. Come right around. Everybody but Bessie was here when you went by."

Anna considered all this a hard beginning of pleasure; she had expected to have an unusually delightful time and already, through her own fault, there had appeared two large thorns which pricked. She was grateful to Mrs. Joy for immediately proving herself to be one of the nicest of mothers, who

had been before entirely misunderstood by a presumptuous young person. After some polite skirmishing, Janet stayed in obedience to Anna's silent though imperative command. There were not many guests, and no boys except those of the family. Anna noticed particularly a blonde, pleasant-faced young girl who talked with Emma Joy about their French lessons and daily readings, and seemed to be on familiar terms with all the family; Anna thought it would be interesting if the oldest son of the house should marry her some day.

The garden, with its fragrant flowers, and the party of young people in dainty summer dress made a pretty picture. Anna was glad there were Chinese lanterns, because she enjoyed seeing Robert and Lowry light them; they did not guess that the quiet invalid had seized the opportunity to observe "The Young Boy" and was condemning or admiring every action and word. It was the fad that summer for a young girl to carry a paper fan on which her friends wrote their names, the date of writing and any brief nonsense they chose to add. While Anna enjoyed a little talk with Mrs. Joy, she demurely watched Robert appropriate Janet's fan with the intention of giving his

energy to fanning in payment. The names caught his eye, and he calmly allowed Janet to stay warm while he satisfied his curiosity. When he found a mutual acquaintance, he was radiant ; and Anna was proud to see him so, but puzzled herself to find a satisfactory reason for his feeling so glad.

“ Will you write your name, too,—please ?” asked Janet, smiling up at the face above her. “ That is the second fan I have filled this summer. You can get your name in somewhere,—can’t you ?” When the name had been slowly written, she turned to Lowry. “ May I have yours, too ?”

Lowry wrote nervously and without any flourishes, but he was composed enough to retain the fan and usurp the privilege of working steadily. Anna saw and smiled and sighed ; if only those names were on *her* fan ! She knew she would value them much more than Janet, because Janet had so many names ; and then, too, Janet did not care particularly for Miss Alcott’s *Laurie*, and considered Robert an ugly name. It would be so nice for people to see the names on her fan ; of course, they knew that she did not meet many boys and they would wonder how she secured those two names ; she imagined herself enjoying their mysti-

fication for awhile and then enlightening them in a casual way. She thought this over and over and felt her heart beating quicker, and then was intensely surprised to hear herself say, at last,

“Will you both write on *my* fan, please?”

As they politely complied, she held her breath and wondered at her own audacity. She hoped their thoughts were not very scornful, but it did not matter so much if they were; it was the signatures, entirely separated from any personalities, that she wanted. Before she left that night she proudly possessed the names of all the members of the Joy family and also that of the blonde young girl. It was only a little after nine o'clock when the guests crossed the lawn by the street and paused at the gate for a final chat. As Anna waited and listened she reviewed in her mind each scene and incident of the evening, and then looked forward to the next day and began, at once, to make herself content with what she knew would be uneventful and dull.

“I must not let them go home alone,” came the words from the edge of the group, and then Robert stepped beside Janet. “Let me do that. I think I can manage it as well as you.” His firm grip

on Anna's chair showed that he was putting intelligence as well as strength into the task.

"I guess if mama will let us go home alone, he needn't be afraid. There's a moon, and it's early, and everybody's out front," thought Anna, and a prompt refusal was on her lips, when Janet gracefully accepted. "Well, of course it'll be fun to hear what he has to say to Janet, for of course he will talk to her, though really I'm the one he knows the best. Janet ought to have—she doesn't always do as I think—it was nice in him to say 'them' and not call me an 'it.' 'I'll push *it*,' everybody says."

Robert found that he hardly knew what to say to the invalid's pretty sister; he walked half a square before he thought of anything. "Some fellows and myself went to a Methodist revival the other night," he began, after awhile. "We went just for fun, you know, to hear the shouting and see the people fall over the floor." He paused a minute to let the chair lightly down a curbstone. Anna was indignant and expected every minute to hear Janet stop him. "But gracious, everything was as quiet as could be. I believe one old fellow did say 'Amen!' two or three times. We went way

up to the front so we could see everything well, but we got tired and all of us stalked out. Some of the people frowned at us, but we didn't care."

"What church did you go to?" inquired Janet, in a queer voice. "Didn't you know that in this day most Methodists have forgotten how to shout?"

"I don't know the name, but it was that little church at the corner of Ninth and P Streets. We went to the wrong place for fun that time." Robert thought he was entertaining his company, and his thought was so evident that Janet refrained from disturbing him; but Anna was unmerciful.

"Why, that is the church we go to," she said distinctly. "We all belong there. I guess my sister was there that night you all walked out, because she and mama and papa have been every night lately." There was much more she wanted to say but her courage failed. She was indignant with Janet for being so disloyal to her church just to save a boy from the result of his own wrong.

"Are you Methodists? I'm sure I didn't—I believe I did—but I—" Robert floundered helplessly and searched his mind for some excuse, but none presented itself, and he was very glad to find

that he might pause at the Roderick gate and greet Mrs. Roderick.

"Here is a package for you, Anna. It came five minutes after you left." There was unusual gladness in Mrs. Roderick's voice which Anna noticed at once, and it made her curious.

"Why, who brought it? What is it?" Her hands trembled because they all watched her as she opened the parcel. "A pearl-handled gold pen! Why, I wonder who sent it to me? What does the card say? I can't see."

"A fifteen-year-old editor brought it. He was a nice little fellow, and it's too bad you weren't here to receive the speech he had ready," said Mr. Roderick. "But perhaps he'll put it in his paper and make up what you said in answer."

"It must be the prize," said Anna, slowly and incredulously. "Then my story was the best! Why, it was a horrible thing; I don't see how I ever sent it."

"Never mind. You can write a lot of new stories with this pen and maybe they'll bring in enough money to get pens for the whole family," said Mr. Roderick. "Got any ideas ready?"

"Let me congratulate you," said Robert.

“Daisy said you were trying for something and she will be glad to know you have won. That’s a beauty of a pen.”

Anna at once recognized a difference in his tone as he spoke to her. The condescending kindness was replaced by real awe and admiration. Congratulations from a young gentleman were rather flustering, but she was not a bit sorry that he was there. She could look forward and see that the time would surely come when her school-friends would drift away from her. The pen which she had won would be a constant reminder that with it she might perhaps make a compensation for herself for the loss of their companionship.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DRIFTING APART.

ONCE more, the Rodericks' homesick longings for The Grove were satisfied; they had again enjoyed the long drive from Washington and it took them but a day to settle into the old dear ways and occupations. The red clay, the oak trees, the flowers and friends were as delightful as ever, and the bird-music was still their rising bell. "Oak Cottage" was always open to Clifford's many, shouting playmates, and Anna's mischievous, charming chums, and Janet's gay young lady and gentlemen friends.

Janet was sixteen, and sweet, and the queen of all her clique, although the youngest. Anna proudly noted every triumph of her sister's reign and dreamed great things of her conquests in the days to come. After a few weeks of activity in her own pursuits and close observation of her sister's, The Grove lost half its charm, for Janet went with friends to Atlantic City, to spend the days of

August by the sea. Anna looked eagerly every day for the letters and bravely tried to hide her longing for the return of her sister. In the midst of Janet's gay time, the Roderick home was suddenly disturbed; typhoid fever seized Anna and seemed to have started her on that last, long journey which ends beyond "the bourne of Time." "Oak Cottage" was immediately deserted and the city home kept open for the doctor's visits at all hours of the day. Through all the pain and languor, Anna wanted but one thing—her sister; she kept her letters on the bed and secretly counted the days that must pass before the end of the time set for Janet's absence, but thought she was very successfully hiding her wish.

"Well, Anna, I have sent for Janet to come home," casually remarked Mrs. Roderick one day. She smiled brightly as she raised Anna and turned up the cool side of her pillow. "She has had a long, gay time away, and we want her with us a little while before school, don't we?"

Anna was too weak to be anything but quietly glad; but, all through the day as she tossed about and endured the fever and pain, she thought of nothing but the fact that at last she should see her

beautiful sister and hear her tell of all the good times.

“When will she get here?” she later thought to ask.

“The day after to-morrow,” answered Mrs. Roderick, still brightly ; but when she had left the room her face was as sad as the faces of the friends who came to the house to inquire and of those who returned the sorrowful answer : “No better to-day.”

Anna turned over into a comfortable place at last and contentedly went to sleep ; when she awoke, she thought it was lovely to be ill and have people make things happen just as you want them, and then once more she soothed herself to sleep by saying over and over, “Janet is coming home, home, home ; Janet will be here soon.” Not once did she suspect that there was any reason why Janet must be called home to see her.

Mr. Roderick’s face was bright as he left Anna’s room to get ready to meet Janet at the station ; but, as he left the house and rode through the city, the lines of care came back to his face. When he returned without Janet, he crept softly up to the door of the sick room and patiently waited there till Mrs. Roderick happened to come out.

"I can't tell her that Janet didn't come," he whispered. "I'm going to meet the next train; I suppose Janet couldn't get ready as soon as we thought,—or she didn't get the letter in time to—"

"You need not come in," said Mrs. Roderick, quietly. "I will tell her. The next train comes—"

"In about an hour," said Mr. Roderick, in a relieved tone, and then he went down stairs to walk up and down the hall till train time.

All during her sickness, Anna had not exerted herself to notice who passed in and out of the room; but now, for the first time, she pulled herself over to face the door as it opened.

"Wouldn't she come?" she cried. There was disbelief, amazement, and then unwilling condemnation in her face and tone.

"Something has delayed her," said Mrs. Roderick, sympathetically. "The next train—"

"If she doesn't come then?" Anna now wished to nerve herself for the worst possibility.

"Then she will surely be here the first thing in the morning," said Mrs. Roderick, outwardly confident, although she was much worried and a little doubtful herself.

Anna hoped her mother thought that she was asleep as she lay perfectly still and watched the clock on the mantel. She found herself listening for the cars to stop at the corner, and then she remembered that the line on that street did not pass the depot. When the front door again closed softly and Janet did not come running up the steps, she shut her eyes tightly and did not move for a long while. When the preparations for night were made, neither Anna nor Mrs. Roderick said anything about the second disappointment.

In the morning, Anna again watched the clock, but she had only a general idea when Janet might be expected and she did not care to ask. Mrs. Roderick was frequently going in and out of the room, so Anna did not look up at the opening and closing of the door.

"Aren't you going to look at me, now I'm here?" merrily asked a familiar voice at last. "No, don't turn over. I'll come around."

Janet crossed the room, dropped on her knees and dug her elbows into the bed.

"Well, here I am, and I've had *such* a fine time! What do you mean by getting sick?" Her voice trembled as she said the gay words, and when she

saw her mother's warning look she rested her chin in her hands to hide the quivering of her lips. "I went to the next town to spend Sunday, and didn't get mother's letter till I came back. But here I am, and I have a lot of things for you, and a lot to tell. You'll just get tired of listening!"

"When does school begin?" asked Anna, as she smiled and gazed at the longed-for face.

Janet made a grimace.

"We don't want to talk about that."

"I was just wondering how many days we could have together before then," said Anna.

Janet stood up quickly and turned toward the mantel. She picked up a china donkey and carefully felt the familiar shape which she could not see through her tears, but her voice was even as she answered,

"Well, I want this very part of to-day to get some of the dust off! I feel as if I shall never be clean.—I am so glad to see this donkey, I could just hug it! So you people know what you must expect!"

From that day onward, Anna was content to lie in bed and watch Janet as she stole about the room from time to time, or sat with her book or work in



ANNA'S SICK-ROOM.

the one light corner of the room ; when Janet could not be in the room it was satisfactory to know that she was in the house, and would leave anything to come if called. Now that every member of the family was at home, Anna's mind was free from care, and she used the little strength she had to make herself endure her illness patiently and cheerfully, so that it would be easier for her mother.

Gradually the shadow lifted from the Roderick home, and each one first hoped in secret and then dared to express his belief to the others until, at last, there came a time when it was possible for every face to be bright in every room of the house. Then, while Anna slowly grew stronger, she began to think and to review everything and half-guessed, half-saw, things more clearly.

"Wasn't I stupid?" she said one day to Janet. "I might have known that mama wouldn't spoil your trip just for nothing."

Janet looked up uncertainly.

"Oh, I know *now*!" said Anna, coolly. "But I never thought of it while I was sick."

"Just see how necessary I am to you! There I was, having a good time, and then I had to miss a lot just because you wanted me," said Janet,

teasingly, because she felt as if she could not speak of the past fear.

When Miss Ivah's school opened for the third time, Anna was just able to sit up all day, and her family were apprehensive of the effect of her disappointment.

"You cannot go to school this winter. Do you mind very much, dear?" anxiously asked Mrs. Roderick.

Anna stretched herself and smiled contentedly. "I don't mind a bit. I'm too tired to learn any more just now; and then, I'm older, you see. Just think! I am fourteen."

They exchanged glances, but not a word was said, then or afterward, about Anna's full recognition of what it meant to be an invalid. During the summer she had gradually awakened to the reality which family love and care had hidden, and now she was ready to stay in the home nest and be herself with as much gaiety, wisdom and helpfulness as possible. The absence of lessons was a relief, but she could not have told how much she missed her schoolmates. Miss Ivah called and invited Anna to visit the school when she was stronger. That was a possible pleasure which

Anna thought about and dreamed over, yet all the time she knew she would not go, because now she shrank from making any effort to go out among people. Daisy and Bessie came to see her occasionally, and she was grateful for that much of their company; but Nettie, Cora and Mattie did not happen to remember their former schoolmate at a convenient time when they were not occupied with other things. The happy school days were ended for Anna, and the companionship of the girls was henceforth to be only a pleasant memory.

But the compensation came in the shape of a new caller who had once been an old friend. Anna had vivid memories of the summer playmates who had shared her blocks, dolls and balls at The Grove, but the absence of anything that might serve as a connecting link between the past Nona Edd and the present young girl who came one day to see her caused an awkwardness which Anna tried hard to banish. When Nona had called several times and had once stayed all the afternoon, Anna thought an invitation to luncheon might be acceptable. That seemed to be entirely satisfactory, so she dropped her reserve and thoroughly enjoyed the company of Nona and of a young friend she

often brought with her. Irma Wayn had a self-poise and a power of speech that made Anna both envious and grateful. After much doubt and more than necessary caution, Irma was always included in any special invitation sent to Nona.

"Aren't they nice girls?" Anna repeatedly demanded of her family. "I'm sure I don't see why they come to see me so often; they don't have to—I mean, no one makes them do it. I'm awfully glad they do, though, and I hope they will keep on coming; I do love to hear them talk about what they do at school."

"What do you think?" cried Daisy, one day as she entered Anna's room and changed the quietness into exceeding liveliness. "You haven't missed much of Miss Ivah's school. Bessie and I aren't going any more."

"Oh, why?" asked Anna, trying to keep condemnation out of her voice.

Daisy screwed up her mouth; then she laughed.

"She won't let us."

"Oh, Daisy, you haven't—" began Anna hotly, and then she flushed, remembering that she had no right to reprove.

"I wanted to make you do that," said Daisy,

clapping her hands. "I knew you would think we had been expelled! We can't go to a school when it's closed, can we?"

"Closed? Is Miss Ivah ill?" Anna looked troubled.

"You are such fun!" declared Daisy. "You do just exactly what I want you to. No, Miss Ivah isn't a bit sick."

"I shan't say another word till you tell me everything," said Anna, severely.

"Oh, it's nothing. After Christmas, Miss Ivah's going out somewhere to teach little Indian children, and that breaks up our good times. Cora will stop school—just think! No more studying all the rest of her life! Nettie and Mattie are going to public school, and Bessie and I will make trouble in another private place. Anna, don't you think Indian children will be worse than we were?"

"Oh, no!" said Anna, calmly. "You are the very worst children I ever knew; that's why I like you so much."

Daisy laughed. "Well, our mothers won't let us stop school, so it ain't our fault if we bother more teachers."

It was a great comfort to Anna to know that

something beside her own weakness made it impossible for her to go on studying at Miss Ivah's school ; now she would not have occasional dreams of again going some time in the future and so regaining the friendship of her schoolmates ; she could not see any possibility or hope that she would ever again have any pleasure or occupation outside of her home, so she put by for awhile her ambition and her longing for companionship.

Soon after Christmas, Nettie walked in and took Anna up just where she had left her, and seemed to have no idea that she was doing anything unusual or that Anna might resent it. She was taller and thinner, had acquired some visiting manners, and unblushingly confessed to playing truant from the public school.

"You see, I had to go into a grade lower than the one all the girls of my age are in, and I'm big for my age, and some of the scholars said horrid things," she explained. "I don't like school, anyway. It's lots nicer to walk through the parks and the stores ; that's what another girl and I often do."

Anna only laughed and shook her head, for there was no use in condemning. Nettie did not see the value and use of a good education nor the danger

there might be in constantly walking the streets, and Anna did not know how to enlighten her. "I wish she had my mother," mused Anna, thoughtfully regarding Nettie as she listened to her continuous chatter and admired her frank laugh and gay friendliness. "She would make such a good mother herself if she had more extensive ideas and ideals in her head. She has always had such a nice, cheerful way with me, which shows that she could be splendid if she had a good chance."

Nettie interrupted Anna's musing by picking up a comb which had fallen to the floor and replacing it in Anna's hair. Then she skillfully pushed Anna to the window that she might see some one passing, and quietly rearranged her dress which had caught in the wheel. She had the easy yet careful manner of a mother.

"Most girls would be afraid to do that, or would not think about it or would not want to do it," thought Anna.

"I'm coming to spend some Saturday with you," said Nettie, as she at last got up to go. "Daisy and Bessie have often been up to see me, and I haven't been to see them for an age; but I'm going to be good, after this. Good-by! See you soon."

For some months afterward, Anna neither saw nor heard anything of any of the girls, but one spring evening Cora walked in, calmly reclaimed the old intimacy, and introduced her friend, Aggie Bell. Anna enjoyed Cora's unconsciousness of anything strange in the situation and instantly recognized Miss Aggie Bell as a familiar character who had often tried the very soul of every member of the Roderick family. She lived in the house three doors below Anna and practised on the piano all day with her foot on the loud pedal. Anna could think of nothing to say to Cora, so she turned to her neighbor.

"I have often heard you practising. Do you play without your notes?"

"Yes," was the immediate reply.

"Oh, then won't you play something for me? I love music and I don't hear it often."

Miss Aggie Bell was accommodating, and soon proved herself to be accomplished in the making of striking music and in striking the chords loudly. She continued to play as long as she was asked, and Anna was thankful that she knew so many pieces, because then it was not necessary for her to think of something about which to make talk.

Half an hour later, when the visitors had gone and Anna sat in the parlor trying to discover Cora's motive in coming, the family strolled in to make inquiries.

"It was Aggie Bell playing," explained Anna, laughing at the disapproval evident in all the faces. "Cora Smith brought her. Yes, it did sound like banging, but she kept fine time and didn't stumble a bit."

After that, it was clear to Anna that most of the girls had slipped out of her life. Bessie still called, though very seldom, and Daisy sometimes sent word that she intended to come, but of the rest she knew nothing. The days and weeks went on, and because it was right, and for her mother's sake, Anna kept herself bright and busy with little things; but there were many times when she held her breath to keep back the sobs that came without apparent cause. She had read so often of people who worked successfully for themselves and for others, and oh! the things she longed to do for the joy and help of her family and other people!

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONCE MORE.

“ I DO want to ! ” exclaimed Anna about six months later, as she put down her pen and pushed the sheet of paper back on her desk. “ The question is—do I want to do it *enough* ? ”

There was no one in the room at the time, and she knew that she must answer the question herself. She drummed with her fingers on the desk and listened to the ticking of the clock as she thought about all sides of the matter.

“ There is no reason why I should have a birthday party,” she admitted reluctantly, “ still, I don’t see why I shouldn’t if I want to ; mama would let me and the girls would like it.—There is no use in my making a list of books and things for them to get for me when all I really want is a party. Yes, I want to have it and I will.”

“ List ready ? ” asked Janet, as she came in the room with her hat and gloves on. “ Mama is wait-

ing downstairs ; we must hurry or we shall never get down town."

Anna hesitated ; she very much disliked to say that she wanted a party, because she knew that her family would be so surprised.

"Oh, you needn't do any shopping for me," she said at last, in a very matter-of-fact tone. "I've decided I want to have a party instead of presents."

Janet promptly sat down on the nearest chair. "Really?" she asked slowly, and looking as if she expected almost anything to follow that declaration.

"Yes, I'd like to see all the girls again, and I'm sure they'd like to come to a party. I just thought about it this morning ; you ask mama if it's all right, and then I can write the invitations while you are down town."

Janet saw that Anna was determined, so she did not try to argue against the plan ; she knew that if her mother thought it unwise, she would find a pleasant way to refuse permission.

"Sure that's what you want?" called Janet from the hall downstairs.

"Sure," answered Anna ; then she wondered if she should regret the decision.

"Then all right ; mama says to go ahead."

Anna spread out her note paper on the desk. She disliked to copy anything, and the prospect of writing even the few invitations was irksome ; but that was easier than making a list of guests to be invited. With a scrap of paper before her and the ink drying on her pen she thought aloud :

“ Daisy and Bessie, of course, and Nettie, too. Cora—I have seen only once this year, but I believe she’ll like to come. Nona and Irma, and I’ll ask them to stay all night because they live so far from here. Annette Bruster, because she invited me to her party at The Grove. She’s much younger than the rest, but she’ll like to come. Dell Measure—she doesn’t come to see me except at The Grove, but she won’t be surprised, and she’s at the hotel with Nettie. Cousin Ruth and that girl who comes sometimes to sit with me in church—Mary Wang. Yes, I think I can ask her and also her brother. Oh,—but he’s a boy !”

This fact was not newly discovered, but the thought of it was startling. It suggested the possible necessity of another innovation.

“ If I ask him, there must be a few more boys, because he would not like to be the only boy among so many girls. The girls will like to have them at

the party. But I don't know any more! Well—that Wang boy sits back of us every Sunday, and he's talked to me often when he wasn't obliged to do it. He likes my family and would be glad to come here, I think. Then Janet will want Frank Moyer to come—that'll be two. Oh! I'll invite the two White boys; at The Grove they've often spent the evening at my house when Nettie and Dell were there. *Then I just believe I'll invite Rob and Lowry Joy!*"

The mere idea of this audacity made her tumble back in her chair, while her face flushed and her heart beat quicker. She tapped the desk with her pen a few minutes and then laughed mischievously.

"I shall certainly do it! If they don't want to come, they can send regrets and I won't mind a bit! They would make Nona and Irma have a lovely time, and it will be nice to watch them together. I'll have to be frank with mama and Janet about why I'm asking them; I don't like *that*. But I do want the girls to have a good time—I have a perfectly senseless hope that the young lords will come. I know they admire Janet, and they may come on that account."

At every mail time, Anna watched for the letters

and longed and dreaded to open them to see what each person had answered. First, came enthusiastic letters of acceptance from Nona and Irma. The White boys answered not a word, but from all the rest, including the Messrs. Joy, came the conventional "Accept with pleasure," which afforded Anna so much satisfaction that for days she kept them in her desk where she could easily find them and read them over and over again.

It seemed as if the days would never pass by and so bring the longed-for pleasure. Anna had anticipated so much that when the day really came she could not quite realize it but felt as though she were in a dream.

At five minutes of eight, Anna sat in the parlor waiting for her guests. She was fortified with the Roderick courage and with pride in the centre-piece for the table—a huge block of ice with a hollow in the centre for the lake of lemonade, which was bordered by a wreath of wild honeysuckle. As she greeted her friends with easy words, they did not guess that she was nervous and excited; but her family knew it, because there was an unusual spot of pink in each cheek. The girls looked like dainty butterflies in their light

dresses, and Anna had to struggle with the strangeness of it all while she found different ways to keep them from being constrained. Daisy and Bessie knew that Janet was taking lessons in elocution; so they at once created a demand for her recitations. Anna listened with delight while Janet complied; that was perhaps the best part of the evening to her; she was proud of her sister, proud of her friends for being so appreciative, and proud of herself for having such a sister and such friends.

Then she remembered that Daisy had once been very proud of her brother and had joyfully announced to all that Robert Joy had received a school medal for his excellence in elocution. Anna knew that she must ask him to recite, but it made her shiver to think of deliberately addressing such a self-possessed young gentleman. It was easy to greet him as hostess and then let Janet and the guests entertain him, but anything more than that was almost impossible.

"Now Mr. Joy must favor us," said Janet, turning from the applause to the loudest applauder. "I understand that you recite."

Anna blessed her sister once again.

"I?" exclaimed Mr. Joy. "What an idea! You must excuse me."

His amazed tone made Janet doubt her memory, and she turned to Anna for confirmation. Anna always had the Roderick fortitude; she softly cleared her throat to make a passage for sound and forced out the first words, trusting that she should be able to finish.

"We should like so much to hear you. Daisy told me that you had a medal. Have you it with you? Oh, there!" She bravely pointed it out. "Isn't that it? May we see it?"

"I didn't know Daisy had given me away," said the young gentleman, as he reluctantly and yet proudly detached the medal from his watch chain and allowed it to be handed around. Anna admired Janet as she easily and gracefully gave her congratulations, but she only smiled her own; she was unable to make any more direct claims on the young gentleman's attention.

Lowry groaned as his brother stood up to recite. "Same old things, I suppose?" he asked, wearily.

"The same," answered Robert, good-humoredly. "You can't expect new ones every time. You needn't laugh."

"Shan't try," drawled Lowry.

Anna thought this was disloyal to a member of one's family, but as Irma was scolding the culprit she smiled at him sympathetically and then flushed as she caught herself doing it. She could imagine that some people might sometimes be tired of hearing their relatives recite but she knew that she should never be tired of hearing Janet. When the clapping subsided, Anna compelled herself to look at the flushed victor and to speak one short sentence of praise ; then her courage failed and she breathlessly turned to the others and managed to say more to them, so that the young gentleman could hear.

"Now, Janet, will you please pass those papers and pencils?" she asked, when the comment was ended and there was a lengthy pause. It was trying to have every one looking expectantly at her, but she forced herself to clearly explain that each one was expected, with eyes shut, to draw a pig, and then to compose a rhyme of not less than four lines about the pig. "When you try, you'll see how easy it is," she added, for she wanted all to make some effort.

There was a chorus of protestation and groan-

ing, much comment and joking about the subject chosen, and then all settled to work. At the end of half an hour, Mr. and Mrs. Roderick had decided upon the best and the worst papers and Anna read aloud :

FIRST PRIZE.

Can you guess what I am? I doubt if you can;
I am neither a horse, a dog nor a man,
But a horrid old thing (I don't care a fig)
Mothers call greedy boys—just "A nasty big Pig."
—IRMA WAYN.

HONORABLE MENTION.

With both eyes shut and a trembling hand,
I have drawn a Pig at your command.
I have told you this because, you see,
I feared you'd ask "What can it be?"
—NONA EDD.

Draw a Pig with my eyes shut!
How can you ask it?
If I did, it would surely go
In the waste basket.
—DAISY JOY.

This Pig drawn here
Wouldn't sell for a nick,
Because it was drawn
For Anna Rod'rick.
—LOWRY JOY.

Anna's laughter broke into the reading of the last rhyme, and when her audience understood the unintentional aspersion they clapped and hissed together.

"Isn't it a four-line rhyme?" demanded Lowry, in an injured tone. "You mustn't be hard on a fellow without any brains."

"It isn't true, you see," criticised Irma. "You must write about true things if you want to be admired and paid these days. *Realism*,—you know."

"You're at the High School fooling with English literature, aren't you? I cut all that long ago," retorted Lowry. "*You* think mine is the best any how, don't you?"

Daisy could not help staring at her brother's devoted tone, and Robert softly applauded with his foot.

Promptly Lowry turned to him. "Robert, I knew you'd forget," he said despairingly. Then he turned to the others and explained. "His foot isn't so very big but it does come down hard; heavy tread, you see. I told him to be careful, before he started out."

The retort was not much in itself, but Robert was of the age to be intensely embarrassed by the

concentration of attention on his feet. Anna met his uneasy look and laughed with him, instead of at him, hoping that that would be some comfort, though she knew he could never know how much effort it cost her to try to relieve him.

"Shall I read the rest?" she asked promptly; then she continued:

I will label this sketch
Like the artist of old,
"This is a Pig."
There, now, you are told.

—NETTIE PAULINE.

I am sure I don't know what to write,
My head is one great blank to-night.
I can only say, what is evident quite,
That the Pig I have drawn is a terrible fright.

—BESSIE MAY.

This little Pig went to market,
This little pig stayed at home,
This little pig had roast beef,
This little pig had none.

—ROBERT JOY.

When Anna read the first words of the familiar rhyme from "Mother Goose," there were suppressed exclamations and disapproving grunts, and,

when she finished, there was a loud chorus of condemnation.

“Who’s the thief?”

“Shame!”

“Where’s the cap for the dunce?” were the cries which broke from the indignant audience, to the evident amusement and enjoyment of the culprit. Anna wondered why she should be so intensely disappointed to find Robert Joy incapable of making a rhyme. She hoped he would make a good excuse for himself, but he bore the teasing in serene silence. When everybody was tired of trying to make him realize that he had lost an opportunity to distinguish himself, Anna read the last rhyme:

BOOBY PRIZE.

I very much fear
I am out of my sphere;
(That was really a tear!)
But it’s your fault, my dear,
For having the face
To put me in a place
Where I can’t show my grace
As I could in an ace,
Were I only at home in the barnyard.

—DELL MEASURE.

“The others have written excuses in prose. Now, Janet, please reward these poets,” said Anna. To Dell Measure, Janet handed a printed booklet of Mother Goose rhymes illustrated with gaudily colored pictures. To Irma, she also gave a booklet; the painting-paper cover was decorated with violets, and the first page presented a pen and ink sketch of a pig with these verses:

I'm decidedly out of place, I admit,
My dainty surroundings don't seem to fit
As does the dirt of the old farmyard,
So to stay here I think is rather hard.
But a model was needed, so I am told,
That friends might draw, and though I scold,
Without the reward of a single nick,
I'm here at command of Anna Rod'rick.

“It is a memory and souvenir book,” explained Anna. “You are to get these artists and poets to put their productions and signatures on the blank pages. Janet painted the cover and drew the pig, and I made up the lines.”

“You took a week to do it, too, I know,” said Daisy, mischievously. “Let's see how you can do one all in a minute, as you made us do. You said it was easy. Now you've got to make one while we all watch you.”

“Yes, and then see if you’ll scorn us for thinking it hard,” said Lowry.

Surprised in this way, Anna stared desperately at the floor and wished that she had never thought of entertaining her guests in that way. But she felt that she was not to be let off, and while they clamored she made herself keep calm and so secured the first three lines. As she audibly consented and accepted pencil and paper, she rejected three endings that would not rhyme; then she wrote down the first three lines and paused. She had said it was easy, and so they all began to tease. She looked desperately at the floor, then suddenly smiled at them all and coolly wrote :

Once upon a time a great fat pig
With the farmyard dog did dance a jig.
First to the left and then to the right
They whirled about with all their might.

I saw it all from my seat on the hill
And presently joined them with right good will;
And then right there on that grass so green
Began a dance such as never was seen

Before or after, for in that jig,
There danced a dog, a clown, and a pig.

—ANNA RODERICK.

"Needn't try to catch Anna!" said Cora, admiringly, but no one heard because of the hand-clapping.

"That's the best time I've had in my life, Anna Roderick, and I've been to lots of parties," said Irma Wayn the next morning, as she got up from the breakfast table and rushed after her hat. "Mrs. Roderick,—thank you ever so much for having us here over night. *Isn't* that youngest Mr. Joy handsome?—and so nice! I had lots of fun with him. *Is* he only fifteen? You'd think he was nineteen, anyway. Anna, if you don't know a quantity of boys you make up in quality,—doesn't she, Nona?"

Nona emphatically seconded the remark, as she always did when Irma spoke.

"Did you really have a good time?" asked Anna, wistfully. She wanted to believe it.

"Yes, indeed! And I hope you will have another soon and invite us all." There was no mistaking the sincerity of Irma's tone. "Why, you discovered my powers of rhyming! Now, I'm going to the Principal of my High School and ask him to get me excused from the first two lessons because I went to a party last night."

Janet laughed. "You can do it."

"Nona wouldn't. She sees too much of his side of the matter," laughed Irma. "If you go into his office as if you're afraid, of course he'll roast you. I look just at my side and then I expect him to do what I want. He'll say, 'Miss Wayn, don't you know that there are more important things than parties?' I'll say, 'Oh, yes, sir; but once in a while I have to play, so I'll manage to live to take in the important things.' Then he'll write my excuse—the dear man."

"Now if I should say that to him, he would send me to the 'matinée' for bad conduct," said Nona, mournfully.

"The best of it is that my two teachers will frown and stare and ask if I'm sick, and I'll say 'Oh, no; I'm perfectly well, thank you.' They'll frown again, mutter 'Incomprehensible,' and try to be dignified as they say 'You are excused'—when I knew that already. Come along, Nona Edd. If I say another word, I'll have to be excused for tardiness, too. Anna, I'm coming soon to pay a party call. Wouldn't it be lovely if that youngest Joy should be here then? *Good-by.*"

"How did you do it, Anna? Everybody had a lovely time. There wasn't a minute when they

wished they knew what to do with themselves," said Janet. "I know when I have my party that I shan't be able to manage my people like that!"

Anna was grateful for the praise. Now she really permitted herself to believe that the party was pleasant to all.

"I didn't do much, Janet. Of course, I have *ideas*—but you know my ideas have to live away above my actions. Several times I wished I was upstairs in bed! I didn't see that it was such a great time. I am so glad you think it was."

CHAPTER XXV.

ALONG THE RIVER.

THE birthday party which seemed to be such a social triumph elated Anna more than she knew ; consequently, a month later, she allowed her sound judgment to be tampered with. In the midst of house-cleaning, Nona came to spend the day and report the various happenings in the suburb where she lived ; so the two girls had their luncheon of crackers and cheese and milk in the kitchen. There had been, in the suburb, a large picnic to which Nona had not been invited, and, while Anna condoled with her friend, she had a sudden, intense realization of the youthful pleasure there must be in picnics, and that such pleasure never had and never would be her own. Nona spoke in a matter of fact way of friendly intercourse and companionship between her girl and boy friends, and Anna had a sharp sensation of pain as, for the moment, she faced her own lack of any

such thing, and had a dim idea of how much more pain it might cause in the future.

“Wouldn’t it be nice if *we* could have a picnic!” suddenly said Nona. “Your father and mother would take us somewhere, wouldn’t they?”

Two months ago, Anna would have unhesitatingly vetoed the proposition because she knew that, to Nona, the idea of a picnic included having boys as well as girls. Now, she allowed that knowledge to be weighed down by her desire to please Nona and by the dazzling thought of another social connection with her old playmates.

“Well, I don’t know,” she temporized. “They will if they can, I guess. It’s rather hard to take me anywhere, you know. We’ve sold the horse and carriage; and anyway, whom could we invite? I know so few people.”

“Oh, Irma and a girl at the park, and we’d each ask a boy. You could ask that pretty Bessie and she—”

“*She* won’t ask a boy,” hastily interrupted Anna. “She says her mother would lock her up if she should look at one—and besides she doesn’t want to.”

“Well, I guess she isn’t afraid to go with boys

on a picnic. Can't you ask that girl and boy from your church and the Joys?"

"I suppose I could," said Anna slowly. "If mama says so. How would it do to go down the Potomac when our Sunday-school goes? I am going on that excursion, but it is only a week from to-day, and we could not plan a picnic in that time."

"Oh, yes, we could; that is just the thing. I'll ask my friends to-morrow. Can't I take you around to yours to-day?"

Anna gasped at the thought of this prompt decision and action; it would necessitate asking her mother's permission in the presence of Nona, and that would prevent a free discussion of the obstacles in the way. She had half intended to ask her mother to refuse because Nona could not be offended at that; but she thought, with a sense of longing, that a picnic would be so nice, and she knew that if it was mentioned first before Nona there would be a better chance of having it. After a few moments' thought, Anna deliberately put aside her scruples and her better judgment and was as eager as Nona.

"It's too hot to go now. You stay to dinner, and then we'll go if mama says yes."

Anna hardly knew how to broach the subject to her mother; her cheeks burned as she rapidly stated the plan.

“A picnic? Why—” Mrs. Roderick looked at Anna in surprise. “Why do you want a crowd, dear? Just ourselves would be so much nicer; we would like to have Nona and Irma, of course, if they care to go. Don’t you think you will enjoy that just as well?”

Back of the words, Anna knew there was an appeal to her good sense, and it was very seldom that she did not readily respond to such an appeal, but now she wavered. She did not care so very much about the picnic for herself; it was silly for an invalid to try to be like other girls, and it would be much nicer to be free from responsibility for another’s pleasure. She was about to cheerfully withdraw her request when she looked at Nona’s eager face and thought of her social prestige.

“Oh, mama!” Various motives impelled her to put into her voice more disappointment than she really felt. “Don’t you know what a nice time we had last year when Janet took her friends on the Sunday-school excursion?”

“You really want to invite boys and girls to go

with us?" asked Mrs. Roderick. It was another chance for Anna to be sensible.

"Yes, mama," she said eagerly, and her eyes appealed for her mother's entire approval.

Mrs. Roderick thought a minute. "Well, then, make your plans," she said quietly. "But don't ask too many."

Anna wanted her mother to be thoroughly in sympathy with the plan and was not satisfied with the mere permission. "Will it be all right mama?" she asked quickly.

"Yes, we will make a very good time for ourselves," she said brightly, and Anna forgot her doubts and her prudence. After dinner, when the sun had gone down, Nona wheeled Anna out and, as they chatted eagerly, Anna felt almost as if she were another girl to whom picnics were matter of course events; their anticipations were much encouraged when they found that Bessie and the two church friends instantly accepted the invitation. Success seemed certain until they reached Daisy's house. She came out of the basement entrance with her napkin in her hand and tried hard to hide her surprise at the visit. Again Anna found it difficult to mention the plan.

"Rob and Lowry and I?" Daisy repeated, and Anna wondered why her cheeks were so flushed. "If you ask mama, maybe she will let me go. Come around in the side yard. She isn't dressed for evening so she can't come out here."

"How do you do, Anna? You wanted to see me?" said Mrs. Joy. "You must excuse my wrapper. These days are so warm—"

"I should think you would want to dress as comfortably as possible," said Anna, and then she briefly explained her plan. "Won't you let Daisy go with us?" she asked, and then the old fear of Daisy's mother came over her, and she could not get breath to name the boys, too. It was impossible to make herself say anything more, so she left that for Daisy to do afterward. She wondered why Daisy apprehensively watched her mouth and then sighed in a relieved way.

"I am sorry, but I couldn't think of it," said Mrs. Joy, firmly. "I don't often let even my big boys go on the water and, when they do go, I'm sick and nervous till they get back. Daisy must content herself with going down the river with her mother some time."

Even then, Anna was unable to say that the in-

vation was for the boys also ; she was sure Daisy would state the fact as soon as she had gone, and she hoped Mrs. Joy would think she had misunderstood.

When they were out of the yard, Nona stopped suddenly. "Why, you didn't ask about the boys! I didn't notice it till just now. We want them, anyway. Shall we go back?"

"Oh, Daisy will ask them," said Anna, with apparent carelessness. "I wonder if Etta Black and her brother would want to go? He goes with the Joy boys, and Etta is at Bessie's school. I knew them at The Grove, some time ago, but I had forgotten about them. We do want a nice crowd, and it won't hurt to ask them, will it?" Now that Anna had broken away from prudence, she did not fear to do what she would not before have considered for a moment. Although she did not then hesitate about inviting the two who were almost strangers, her heart thumped loudly and she became more and more nervous as they passed each street corner and came nearer to the house.

A small boy on a velocipede came out of Mrs. Black's gate just before Anna rolled in. Mrs. Black remembered Anna and made her very welcome,

but she went, almost immediately, to the side-garden to gather a bouquet of flowers for the invalid, leaving Anna to bravely face the astonished daughter and explain her reason for calling.

"Why, yes, I'd like to go if I can," said Etta Black in a dazed way. "Do you mean Ralph?"

"Ralph?" repeated Anna, puzzled.

"Yes, my brother. There he is on his velocipede. I am afraid he is too little to go."

"Oh, I didn't know you had two brothers," said Anna, laughingly. "I meant the one older than you. He goes with the Joy boys, doesn't he? We've asked them to go with us."

"My big brother?"

The girl's nature was frank, and she could not help showing all her amazement and scorn. Anna at once felt faint as she quickly recognized what a blunder she had made; through her mind went the whimsical notion that the young gentleman must have grown as big as a mountain, and she had asked him to a doll's tea-party! With intense sincere repentance she wished that she had never tried to have a picnic, but, at the same time, she bravely nerved herself to answer in a way which would prevent open acknowledgment of the bitter mistake.

"Big?" she said wonderingly. "Is he bigger than you? I haven't seen him for some time. The last time I did see him, he was just a boy."

"Are the Joy boys going?" sharply asked Etta Black.

"They are to let us know if they can go." Anna put her hand on her wheel and, moving her chair a little, she looked at Nona. "I must not stay because we have been out longer now than we intended. Send me word as soon as possible if you can go."

"Our Sunday-school goes on an excursion to Bay Ridge the same day, and mama may want to go there. If she doesn't, I'll go to Marshall Hall with you," said Etta. There was a silent, unanimous decision that it would be best for everybody to ignore the big brother.

On the way home, Nona and Anna carefully refrained from admitting to each other that there had been any discouragement or unpleasantness and, when they reported to Mrs. Roderick, by unspoken mutual consent they merely stated the inoffensive fact that they would not know until later whether or not four of the people could accept the invitation.

The sun shone brightly the day of the excursion, and when the steamer "River Queen" backed out from the Seventh Street wharf and slowly swung around, Anna looked eagerly down the sparkling river and then glanced back at the members of her family, and at Nona, Bessie, and the sister and brother from her church.

"Where is our picnic?" she asked gaily, and then she laughed at Nona's rueful face. "Nine people out of seventeen expected! Well, I'm rather glad we don't have to bother about so many people—as long as we can't have them."

"Haven't we had the worst luck?" said Nona, in a disappointed and injured tone. "The boy I asked couldn't come, then Irma's people had to move just now and it was such a disappointment to her—I should think they could have moved without her help. The boy she would have asked belongs to the District Guard and is camping at Fort Washington; if the boat stops there, we may see him. Didn't your two boys send you *any* word?"

"Daisy's brothers, you mean?" asked Anna, quickly. It was unusual for her to be in that kind of a false position and she continued a little bitterly,

“If they didn’t want to come, they should have said so. I think my invitation deserved a polite answer, anyway. I am rather surprised that they should act in that way. I thought they considered themselves perfectly correct in everything.” Anna was not really as much offended as she thought she ought to appear because of Nona.

Bessie looked quickly at Anna and opened her mouth; then she looked up and down the river and at all the people near. At last she leaned over the rail and looked at the rippling water as she said slowly,

“Anna, I want to tell you something. Daisy didn’t tell Rob and Lowry you wanted them to come too.”

Anna looked at her without comprehending.

“The idea!” cried Nona.

“No, Daisy didn’t tell them,” repeated Bessie as she slowly tore tiny pieces of paper from her candy bag, but showed no other sign of embarrassment. “Daisy thought she wouldn’t say anything to you about it, but I know she won’t mind my telling.” This was a frank statement and yet it left much to be guessed at; to Anna, it was like a flash light which showed everything clearly. Previous expe-

rience made it easy for her to grasp readily the meaning of Daisy's action, and the realization was not as painful as it might have been had there not been similar incidents to prepare the way.

"I am very glad you did tell me," said Anna, cordially. "I like to know just how things are. But don't you think Mrs. Joy might have let Daisy come?" In that way she slipped away from discussion of the matter and drew the others after her, because she felt that entire frankness would be painful for all. That day held many pleasures entirely new to her, and she meant to enjoy them thoroughly—when she reached home she would learn and profit by the lesson.

The young people on the boat had gathered around Mr. and Mrs. Roderick, and were following their lead in song. The older folks settled themselves comfortably and listened or hummed softly when they could not restrain themselves. The steamboat's paddles churned the water to white foam; the sunlight made the ripples sparkle; the breeze blew hats and hair about and swayed the bushes on the banks. Anna had been trying to banish the thought of the lesson she must learn and so her mind was far away from all the beauty

of scenery and the gaiety of friends when she caught the words :

“ Along the river of Time we glide,
Along the river, along the river !”

The melody went on to the end, but Anna heard no more just then. She drew a long breath and leaned her head on the back of her chair. Her guests were singing with the rest, so she need not feel responsible for their enjoyment and could give a few minutes to herself. “ The girls *are* gliding ‘along the river of Time,’ and I might have known it before,” she sadly thought. “ I did know it—but I wouldn’t believe. I must stay in my quiet nook and see them pass by. Well, I shan’t cry—”

“ What are we stopping at Alexandria for ?” asked Nona, as chains were thrown over and fastened to the posts of the wharf. “ Anna, wake up ! What are you thinking about ?”

“ Christ Church and George Washington’s pew,” said Anna, promptly. “ Don’t you wish we had time to get off and see it ?” She watched the freight put off of the boat, and barrels and boxes shoved up the gang-plank to the warehouse. “ Funny to stop an excursion boat for that, but

then, you know, this boat is the pokiest one on the river if it is the 'Queen.' I am very glad I don't live in Alexandria; I suppose George is a great consolation to those who do. It is such a dead looking place, but I suppose the residents like to say that it was once upon a time one of the largest shipping ports in America."

Farther down on the bend of the river, was the gray stone Fort Washington which grimly guarded the approach to the Capital City. Not a boat could come up the river and round the bend without being seen from the fort. The "River Queen" stopped there for a minute to throw off a mail-bag. The soldiers of the U. S. army who were stationed at the fort and the District militia campers were already on the wharf looking eagerly for acquaintances and joking and staring at the strangers.

"There's Irma's friend," cried Nona, and then she rapidly pointed out the little marks of difference which enabled Anna to locate that particular one of the many young soldiers in undress attire.

"Where's Irma?" asked the handsome, sunburnt young boy. They could not hear his voice above the shouting, but they read the motion of his lips.

Nona shook her head and the boy's face fell.

"Now see how disappointed he looks. That's just the way. If Irma isn't around, he won't have anything to do with the other girls."

As the boat went on down the river the banks on each side became gradually higher. Anna noticed that a white-haired old gentleman gazed steadily at one side for some time, and then suddenly began to sing :

"Oh, come sinners, come, to the highlands of Heaven—"

The old people immediately joined in the familiar hymn and, in a few minutes, every one on that deck was swelling the chorus of sound. The wrinkled faces shone and the flippant faces sobered as they were thrilled in various degrees by the fervency in the air and the words.

"For the tide is receding—"

The words came clearly and seemed to have a personal, unwarranted significance to Anna. She clasped her hands in her lap and bravely smiled to herself.

"I tried to go beyond my limit and now my tide is certainly receding," she murmured softly.

"And forever cease—"

"*I will!*" thought Anna with a half-conscious appreciation of the way she had twisted the meaning, and then she slowly repeated aloud her decision. "I'll just cease trying to be what I am not and I will be happy as I am and wherever I am." Her mother's wise teaching enabled her to partly understand the reason for the rapt look on some of the old faces, and while the young people around her quickly went back to their gay mood, there crept into her heart an aspiration and purpose which was to be like a "little leaven which lighteneth the whole loaf."

Fifteen miles down the river, Mount Vernon could be seen on the Virginia bank and River View on the Maryland side. At the latter place, a crowd of picnickers idled away the summer day and, at the former, was the quiet tomb and the former home of the Father of his Country. Still farther down was Marshall Hall, where all the sunshiny day Anna and the rest of her party spent the pleasant minutes under the long grape arbor and the tall trees and down on the shore where a few lovers of bathing tumbled about in the water. The music of the band, the dancing in the pavilion, the merry-go-round, the roll-a-coaster, the swings, the fragrant

woods, the happy people, and the solemn grave-stones at the side of the Marshall homestead furnished all the interest and the amusement that Anna needed. Until she reached home she resolutely kept out of her mind all thoughts of the unpleasant incident of the day and the disagreeable possibilities of the morrow.

That night, as her light was put out, the clock struck twelve and, all alone, she faced the situation. It included much more than the incident of the day. She sat up in bed and hugged one of her pillows as she looked at the sparkling sky and said aloud :

“ Yes, I am an invalid, and I must not try to be anything else, and I must not mind if I do not ever have many ‘playmates.’ The boys will soon take Nona and Irma away from me. Daisy will go soon after, but I think I’ll have Bessie for some time yet, unless she gets tired of me. *That* I can’t help. Oh, I do wish I had not been so foolish ; *why* did I try to have a picnic? Home is my place—and it’s lovely. Oh, I wonder if those boys said anything ugly about being asked to my birthday party, and that’s why Daisy—”

A sob shook the pillow from her arms and scald-

ing tears hid the bright stars ; but she wanted to be sensible, brave and sweet, so she steadily counted sheep to make her sleep and, the next morning, went on living the minutes cheerfully.

THE END.

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